

OF BROKEN WINGS AND *OTAKU* EMPATHY: REPAIRING  
FRACTURED RELATIONSHIPS USING ANIME TO  
RECONNECT DISENFRANCHISED  
YOUTH WITH THE GOSPEL

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A FINAL PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DOCTORAL STUDIES  
COMMITTEE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
Dayton, Ohio  
May, 2014

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **OF BROKEN WINGS AND *OTAKU* EMPATHY: REPAIRING FRACTURED RELATIONSHIPS USING ANIME TO RECONNECT DISENFRANCHISED YOUTH WITH THE GOSPEL**

by  
Tracy Mercury-Morrison Zielinski  
United Theological Seminary, 2014

#### **Mentor**

Richard L. Eslinger, Ph.D.

Members of Shepherd's Community United Methodist Church in Lakeland, Florida, experienced media, discussion, self-examination, and experimentation to develop empathy for *anime* fans (*otaku*) who are part of the disenfranchised generation of youth and young adults that feel unwelcome in the Christian community. The intervention aimed to inspire Christians to reclaim *otaku* for the Gospel. Research was accomplished through qualitative mixed methodologies including: surveys, interviews, observations, and group activities. The resulting data suggest that participants gained understanding of the *anime* culture and the importance of inviting *Otaku* to spiritual conversation, even though it did not increase empathy in all participants.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to acknowledge the following congregations and individuals for their dedication and contributions to this project.

Shepherd's Community United Methodist Church

Drs. Dick & Elise Eslinger

Dr. Armando Rodriguez

Dr. Gye Miller, Esq.

Dr. Russ Dalton

Dr. John Whitaker

Dr. Glenda Kaminski

Drs. John & LaShelle Edmerson

Judith Norvell

Madeline Green

Candace Kelley

Brice Thomas

Pam Farr

Mark Capron

Eric Chaney

Sandy & David Moss

Ray & Tammy Avery

Eric Whitney

Jay Domagala

The Staff of the Lakeland Center

Eleanor & Charlie Pfluger

The Members of Writers For All Seasons

Mike and Linda Westbrook

Larry & Sharon Skidmore

Pamela Jackson

Kathy Carson

Steve Jones

Esther Searfoss

Jack Faber

The Members of Stone Hill Science Fiction Club

## **DEDICATION**

I am indebted to the love, attention, and dedication of the outsiders in my life.

To my husband, Dave Zielinski: You have been a sounding board, my first set of eyes, my technical support, and my partner on this journey. You should earn an honorary degree for your effort.

To my brother, Jay Domagala: You taught me the value of perfection in cosplay and inspired me in ways that cannot be quantified.

To my mother, Irene Cross, who taught me how to yearn.

To the members of The TBD Anime Club in Lakeland, Florida. As a fellow *otaku*, you have supported my fandom and given me shelter from the normal.

Grace & Peace,

Tracy Mercury-Morrison Zielinski

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADR	automated dialogue replacement or additional dialogue recording
ADV	A.D. Vision
AFO	Anime Festival Orlando
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
CCC	Christians in Contemporary Culture
CE	Common Era
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
FSC	Florida Southern College
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
LARP	Living-action Role Playing
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, Questioning (or Queer)
M.Div.	Master of Divinity
MARC	Master of Arts in Religious Communication
MASM-LM	Master of Arts in Specialized Ministries: Liturgical Ministries
NIV	New International Version
OMG	Oh My God!
R.A.	Resident Advisor
RUF	Reformed University Fellowship
SCUMC	Shepherd's Community United Methodist Church
TBD	To Be Decided

UCC	United Church of Christ
UMC	United Methodist Church
VIP	Very Important Person
VOA	Voice Over Actor
WBC	Westboro Baptist Church
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association

My broken wings  
Still strong enough to cross the ocean with  
    My broken wings  
How far should I go drifting in the wind?  
    Higher and higher in the light  
        My broken wings  
Still strong enough to cross the ocean with  
    My broken wings  
How far should I go drifting in the wind?  
    Across the sky, just keep on flying

– Tomoko Tane, “Broken Wings” from *Trinity Blood*

## INTRODUCTION

The context for this research is the Shepherd's Community United Methodist Church, a young congregation in Lakeland, Florida. Having been a disenfranchised youth and young adult herself, the researcher observed that outcast youth and young adults were underrepresented in her church and from the other congregations in her experience. The researcher narrowed her focus to her peer group, fans of *anime* (アニメ pronounced ANΩ-may or ANI-may).<sup>1</sup> Also known as *otaku* (おたく), this group of fans and outcasts includes the researcher and has allowed a rapport of trust and mutual respect to be established.<sup>2</sup> In her article "Engaging Our Imagination, Empathy and Angst: How TV Shapes Community," Theresa Latini inspired the intervention:

Television shows can engage our imagination, empathy, and angst in such a way as to shape our life together. When interpreted theologically, these shows may inspire relationships characterized by *koinonia*. They may move us beyond our limited circles of friendship into larger communal ties through empathetic, parasocial interactions.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Anime as defined by *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* is "a style of animation originating in Japan that is characterized by stark colorful graphics depicting vibrant characters in action-filled plots often with fantastic or futuristic themes." (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Anime>), accessed January 28, 2013.

<sup>2</sup>An Otaku, for the sake of this paper refers to an *Anime* fan. In Japan the term is prerogative meaning an *Anime* fan who is obsessed with *Anime* to the detriment of all other aspects of life, such as work, family and responsibilities. American fans have claimed the term and redeemed it, giving it a positive connotation.

<sup>3</sup>Theresa F. Latini, "Engaging Our Imagination, Empathy and Angst: How TV Shapes Community," *Word & World*, Vol. 32, No. 3. (Summer 2012): 259; *Koinonia* or κοινωνία is the biblical Greek word for community.

The Pauline mandate to remember our past suffering and to reach back and offer assistance to those who are currently suffering (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 1:3-7) and God's promise to bring the outcast back into the fold (Jeremiah: 30:15-17) are the inspirations for this project.

A lack of common ground is the major hurdle between the Christian and *otaku*. An *Otaku*, outcast by choice or by discrimination, does not necessarily have the highest of regard for the Christian church. The church's loudest proponents have often done the most damage to the outcast, such as Westboro Baptist Church and their crusade against homosexuals. It becomes, therefore, a call to mature Christians to seek common ground with *otaku*, such as through *anime*, which shows a depth and breadth of spirituality that may be unknown or uncomfortable to the typical Christian.

Chapter One identifies the places in the researcher's life where she felt like an outcast and her faith story. The researcher shares her spiritual autobiography, her calling, and the events that led to her journey to become the founder and facilitator of The TBD Anime Club, a mission of her church. The researcher then discusses the two worlds she straddles, Shepherd's Community United Methodist Church (SCUMC) and the *otaku* community of Florida, including The TBD Anime Club and the convention circuit.

Chapter Two examines the materials and literature regarding scholastic and popular sources about *anime* and *manga*, media studies, and mission and evangelism.

Chapter Three establishes the theoretical foundation of the paper, including the biblical, historical, and theological concepts that speak to outcasts and their liberation.

Chapter Four records the methodology and qualitative tools used to measure the effectiveness of the project. This includes the pre- and post-tests used and their intentions.

Chapter Five shares the field experience of the intervention, including the results of the pre- and post-tests, sample discussion questions, homework, and the results thereof.

Chapter Six provides the researcher's reflections, summary, conclusion of the effectiveness of the intervention, the steps which could improve the project for further exploration, and the future implications of the study with constructive ecclesiology.

The end goal of this effort was to repair fractured relationships between the outcast and the Gospel of Jesus Christ by presenting Christians with a groundwork of information for building personal relationships with *otaku* and encouraging their confidence toward living out their faith in front of others.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **MINISTRY FOCUS**

#### **Spiritual Autobiography**

The author, Tracy Zielinski, has always felt like an outcast. She is an only child of a single mother, who filed for divorce before her birth because the father was a self-avowed child molester. The researcher was raised in a reserved and quiet home with her maternal grandparents, where she was warned not to speak about her father to outsiders, and encouraged to not speak of him inside of the family home either. The family was in hiding from him. She lived under an assumed name with a constant fear of being kidnapped by a man with blonde hair and a dark beard. Her home life and formative years were distinctive.

Tracy's formative years were faith-free. As part of a school assignment, she learned that she must be Protestant, which meant she was not to be Catholic or Jewish. Protestant was therefore defined by what it was not. It was the first time she could remember being understood not by who she was, but by what she was not. The family of the researcher did not attend church unless it was for a special occasion such as a wedding or funeral.

#### *Family History*

Tracy grew up in Massapequa, New York, a small suburb two hours by train from New York City, on Long Island. The researcher's maternal grandmother was an

immigrant. She was born to a very proper British family that moved to New Zealand to escape scandal when she was very young. Her maternal grandfather was a second-generation American.

Her maternal grandmother was a very superstitious woman, so the researcher was raised in a family that practiced odd folk-religion. One minute after midnight, on the first day of every month, the first words out of a person's mouth had to be *rabbits*. If not, the person would miss out on all the good luck for the rest of the month. The color green was bad luck and forbidden from the home and life. The family made wishes on eyelashes, flipped coins under the full moon, and never looked at a new moon through a pane of glass. They threw salt over their shoulders, avoided black cats, and never walked under ladders. The latter was at least practical, as the aunt of the researcher's grandfather was killed when a safe fell on her while walking under a ladder.

It was one odd superstition after another, and the researcher quickly learned to keep her mouth shut, because other people had no idea what she was talking about when she made reference to her family's strange behavior.

### *School*

Tracy's earliest exposure to religion was a child's picture Bible and the movie *The King of Kings* (1961). It was extremely confusing to her and, for years, her first and only theological education came from director Nicholas Ray and her interpretation of the details of that movie as seen through the eyes of a precocious preteen. There was absolutely no concept of a Triune God, nor any explanation of why the man Jesus was

betrayed, tried, and crucified. Was God an absentee parent? Why would God allow his son to die?

Her favorite Saturday morning cartoons were *Voltron: Defender of the Universe*, *The Transformers*, and *G.I. Joe: A Real American Hero*. *Voltron*, an anime translated into English, was the story of five Earthlings sent to protect the good people of a distant planet from the evil forces that are trying to destroy it. The five young men used mechanized lions which, when combined, formed the mighty *Voltron* robot.

*The Transformers* was an American cartoon based on a toy-line co-developed by Hasbro and the Japanese company, Takara Tomy. The story was about alien robots that came to earth after the decimation of their planet. The evil Decepticons wanted to use the Earth for its resources, while the heroic Autobots chose to defend the planet from the evil schemes.

*G.I. Joe: A Real American Hero* was an American cartoon based on the Hasbro toy-line. The story followed the American military unit who stood against the evil forces of Cobra. Even as a child, Tracy was drawn toward stories and cartoons in which the underdog heroes took a stand against evil, doing what was right, even if the odds and society were against them.

It was in junior high school when the researcher's biological father first turned up in her life; he made a dramatic and startling entrance as a substitute teacher in her Spanish class. She had been living under an assumed name for years, but that did nothing to lessen her terror when *Mr. B* introduced himself to the class and gave the reading assignment. He did not give his full name, but she *knew*, from somewhere deep down in her soul, that this man was her father. He made an off-handed remark about the necklace

she wore, saying that his sister had made it and the researcher began to wonder if maybe he knew who she was as well. She spent forty-five minutes in hell that day, waiting to be called out, waiting for him to kidnap or confront her.

At lunch, he prowled the cafeteria, but the researcher found a few moments to use the pay phone to call her mother and let her know what was happening. Her mother advised that she stay calm and take the bus home like nothing had happened. Her turning up would only confirm that the researcher was his daughter, and would make her stand out. That same year, she was diagnosed with an ulcer and began drinking a travel-size bottle of Mylanta™ every day. The family moved to Arizona a few months later. She still owns the identifying necklace, but has not worn it in twenty years.

Arizona was an interesting place to end up after leaving New York. The population was one-third white, one-third Hispanic, and one-third Native American. Most of the people she went to school with had been born in Arizona, if not Prescott itself, and were middle to upper-class. The main industry was ranching and a vast majority of her classmates owned their own horses and guns.

In Arizona, the researcher began forming a new life for herself. The other students loved her New York accent, and asked her to repeat words for their amusement, like *fork*, *car*, *coffee*, *daughter*. She liked the attention it brought her, and she was not scared anymore. Like her accent, the attention soon faded and she had no real foundation for making and keeping friends. She fell in with a group of outcast kids with no real purpose except wearing black clothing and Goth makeup and listening to rock music and poetry. She began writing strange prose and listening to other people's work. She wrote her first novella and helped others turn their writing into something better.

The researcher graduated from high school in the top third of her graduating class of 500 students and was one of only a handful who had intentions of going to college. Seeking to find somewhere she fit in, other than in her family unit, she chose to major in Public Relations at Florida Southern College.

### *College*

During the second week of classes, the researcher's roommate and dormitory neighbors began attending Bible studies. They invited the researcher along and, to make friends, she attended the Reformed University Fellowship (RUF). RUF was a small group lead by a Presbyterian minister and his wife. The researcher used a school Bible and listened without contributing.

The researcher had only been at school for about a month when her great-aunt, Lorraine, died. Being a resident of New Zealand, Aunt Lorraine lived an entire day ahead of the researcher's American family, and that made it seem like she lived in the future. She had had a wonderful accent, an infectious laugh, and a ready smile. In the three times Aunt Lorraine visited the family in America, she made a dramatic influence on the researcher in how she saw the world and her place in it.

Losing Aunt Lorraine was the researcher's first experience with death. With the rest of her family either in Arizona or New York, for the first time she felt the weight of being on her own. On the night of her death, the Resident Advisor (R.A.), who was also a member of RUF, took the researcher for a walk at a nearby lake. During that 3-mile walk, the R.A. told the researcher about her experience with Jesus and how he had cured her of her nightmares as a child. The R.A. promised that Jesus was the ultimate cure for

loneliness. The researcher prayed a prayer that night to ask Jesus into her life to ensure that she would never be alone again. God's prevenient grace had been working on the researcher. God responded to the invitation to work in her life. The researcher began attending the school's chapel services on Sundays and continued to go to Bible Study.

The most important thing that happened to the researcher that summer was that she officially petitioned to have her name legally changed to Tracy Mercury Morrison. For eighteen years, she had lived under an alias to prevent her biological father from finding her and finally, she was able to be *herself*.

When the researcher returned to school in August, a friend introduced her to another student, an older man, who reached out his hand, as if in a dare, and said: "Hi, I'm Dave and I'm an ex-convict." The researcher shook his hand and thought nothing further of the incident. Her friends were geeks of all kinds—ex-convicts, math whizzes, artists, comic book readers and *anime* fans. It was a small, tight-knit, group of outcasts that did not belong elsewhere. After about a year of intense friendship, Tracy and Dave began dating.

Dave was an older student returning to school later in life to change career paths and become a United Methodist pastor, and was a religion major. The researcher began taking religion classes more seriously because of their relationship.

What she found remarkable about Dave was his ability to be real and honest even in his striving for perfection. There was no false piety, no pretense—Dave was, and will always be, just Dave. The researcher found comfort in his style: no outright, forceful evangelism, but a subtle living out of one's beliefs in front of others. What she admires the most about Dave's faith is that he is not afraid to admit that he does not know, is not

sure, or is just confused about his faith, his walk, and his relationship with God. Many people say that their spiritual role models are pastors and preachers, but Dave became Tracy's spiritual role model. Three years after they first met, on August 29, 1999, Dave and Tracy were married.

### *Graduate Work*

The Zielinskis choose United Theological Seminary (UTS) based on the recommendation of alumni. She entered the Master of Arts in Religious Communications (MARC) program concurrent to Dave's Master of Divinity (M.Div) program. The three-year displacement in Ohio was a difficult time. UTS differed from FSC in one dramatic way: at FSC, faith was an elective, something to choose from a myriad of other activities: sororities, intramural sports, clubs, and the local scene. UTS, on the other hand, was all about faith, with electives in worship, practical theology, missions, liturgy, prayer, and song.

UTS on a whole, was a community like their small-band of friends had been in college, and the MARC program was a smaller microcosm of the same. Outside of class, they were not exactly outcasts, but they were a little off-center. They were perceived in a different way than the M.Div students, and sometimes, that was difficult to explain.

Their second year, Dave was rejected by his local District Committee on Ordained Ministry, and since he was already two years into the M.Div. program, the Zielinskis had to come to a decision about their future. They decided to finish their studies with encouragement from their peers and mentors in Ohio.

In the meantime, the researcher decided to add an additional degree program—Master of Arts in Specialized Ministries: Liturgical Ministries (MASM-LM). She found that beside her love of Jesus through academics, she also loved serving at the altar. She had served in many capacities in seminary, but found that her most fulfilling moments came in the quiet, empty chapel, preparing God's house for worship as head sacristan of the UTS Chapel. Though not called to pulpit ministry, the researcher knew that she had been called, and prepared for a very different kind of ministry to a very different kind of people — a servant ministry that did not require her to lead in front, but to walk beside others.

### *The Return*

The Zielinskis returned to her home church, Shepherd's Community UMC (SCUMC) following graduation. They both sought out jobs and ended up in fields they had not expected. Her first job was in after-school childcare for the YMCA. It was another chance for her to form one-on-one relationships with troubled, misunderstood, and disenfranchised young people.

In 2004, Shepherd's decided that its mission and vision was changing, from *Interesting Disinterested People for Christ* to a vision based on families with school-age children. The researcher was not enthusiastic, but she got on board. In a way, it felt like the Zielinskis were being told that they no longer mattered to the vision and ministry of the church.

The church's activities became child-centric and the Zielinskis struggled to do their best in the changing environment. This was not to be the last time the Zielinskis felt

that way, nor was it the only time in which they conformed in order to fit in with the environment of SCUMC.

As a member of Shepherd's Community, the researcher served in many capacities—from worship to discipleship to finance – but her favorite ministry was the praise team. After seven years together, the praise team began to show signs of discord. Before it got out of hand, the pastor stepped in for mediation, stating that the discord was affecting the congregation.

The pastor and the praise team leaders met with everyone in the praise team, individually or as married couples, and talked about the strengths and weaknesses of each person, as well as any concerns that were evident. The pastor accused Tracy of being an outsider who reveled in her *otherness* and asked her to step down from leadership until she could *come back in line*.

In that painful moment, she immediately stepped down from all church leadership roles and limited her ministry to praise team. She felt that, if she was not like anyone else at church, she did not have a right to lead them. Within two years, Dave's plans for ministry had fallen through, and now she was told by her pastor that she was not acceptable even for lay ministry.

The Zielinskis filled the void with work and leisure. She took up fiction writing again and Dave decided to focus on voice acting, which Tracy, as a supportive wife, became interested in that world as well. They began attending *anime* conventions, but made efforts not to miss church. They remained at Shepherd's because they knew the pastor had not seen their true depths, and because God was not finished with them. The

broken relationship between the Zielinskis and the pastor never fully healed. That wound helps color new relationships and how they now lead other people.

Over the next two years, Shepherd's became more diverse, with more people who did not fit the mold. The Church Council Chair approached the Zielinskis to lead a small group at church based on shared interests such as *Star Wars*, Disney, and movies. The researcher was only willing to do it with permission from the pastor. After obtaining permission from the pastor, who seemed oblivious to the reasons why the researcher needed his permission, the Zielinskis began leading three other couples in a group called Christians in Contemporary Culture or CCC. The discussions centered on the intersection of media and faith.

### *The Convention Days*

At about that time, the researcher met a young man name Jei on the internet through mutual friends. Jei was a troubled teenager who did not see the value in his own life. Over a period of fifteen months, the researcher spent hundreds of hours online with Jei, at all times of the night, teaching him that his own self-worth and value could not be determined by the angry and unhealthy people in his life, but that it had to come from somewhere else. The researcher soon discovered that self-confidence and self-esteem were not always the same thing. She began to have confidence in her abilities, yet continued to doubt her own self-worth.

Those exhausting fifteen months endured Jei having cutting episodes, three suicide attempts, losing his home, and his tearful confession about a pregnant girlfriend and her abortion. Jei ultimately moved on from needing someone to listen to him, became

employed, found a home, no longer cut himself, found contentment with his life, and found a new girlfriend. For those fifteen months, the researcher presented Jesus to that troubled young man without ever using Jesus' name.

The same year, the researcher and her husband went to their first *anime* convention and meet Yuki, a fellow attendee who was dressed in costumes from the video game *Final Fantasy VII* that matched theirs.<sup>1</sup> Was Yuki a guy or a girl? Was Yuki straight or gay? Who or what Yuki was did not matter as much as how much Jesus loved Yuki, and how Yuki could be shown that love. How could God's love be shown to a world of outcast misfits, thrown aside by the church, disenfranchised by the church's beliefs?

Yuki's relationship with God was clouded by painful mistakes, arrogant clergy, and unsupportive family members. To Yuki, the researcher became a big sister, a friend, and a mentor. About a month after meeting Yuki, the Zielinskis spent the day with him at Walt Disney World. Then he came to their home, spent the weekend with them, and went to church for the first time since he was denied communion by a priest who could not get past Yuki's gender ambiguity. Soon this shared time became a custom. They made costumes together for conventions, broke bread together, laughed and cried together. Yuki not only allowed them to become part of his family, but he also allowed himself to become part of their family.

Jei had awakened the researcher's idea of stealth ministry—the idea of doing ministry without being obvious. The researcher's experiences with Yuki taught her how to live out her faith in front of others in every way, from subtle to obvious—to allow others to see in her what they want in themselves, but also to see the flaws and brokenness that they have in common.

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<sup>1</sup>Yuki is a gender neutral Japanese name often appearing in *anime*.

### *Resolve*

In 2009, the researcher resigned from the praise team to take on a new ministry—The TBD Anime Club. The TBD Anime Club was designed for young adults just like Yuki. *Anime* is how she met Yuki, and *anime* is how she continues to meet lost and hurting young people who are searching for truth, understanding, and fulfillment. The pastor, despite past history, supported the ministry and its intentions and gave the group his blessing.

In 2012, the founding pastor of the church was reassigned to a new district and a new pastor was sent to replace him. The newly assigned pastor happened to be a younger man who had attended college with the researcher, even though the two did not travel in the same circles.

As with any pastoral leadership change, there was membership loss for the first year and new growth in the second year. Some of the founding members left, but the Zielinskis stayed to offer the new pastor, and the increasingly new congregation of SCUMC, a chance to find its feet again and do ministry together.

Pastoral changes caused ripples in the leadership and ministries of the church. A new youth leader and children's leader, as well as lay leadership, caused the church to re-evaluate the mission statement of the church once again. The new mission of SCUMC was decided: "Growing, Serving, Connecting" and the emphasis was given to attracting young families within a five-mile radius, with lines drawn on a map to encompass the major arteries and communities inside of South Lakeland and North Mulberry.

However, not everything transitioned smoothly, and the new youth leader resigned, leaving a vacuum that had to be filled by parents. Following that, a decision was made to

build a separate children's worship service and remove the children from the sanctuary during worship. This decision, brought to the council by the pastor and children's leader, was hotly debated, and a compromise was made to give parents the choice to sign their children into the children's worship service after the worship set. Even with the compromise, some families left the church because what attracted to them to SCUMC in the first place was the inclusion of children in the full body of the church experience. The final ramifications of this decision were still unknown at the time of this writing.

As SCUMC continued to deal with the some ministry transitions, the Zielinskis lost their place and established ministries. Dave had run the sound board for many years, but his job responsibilities increasingly took him out of the sound booth. When the new pastor arrived, he did not know that Dave was a professional sound engineer and Dave's position was filled by another dedicated volunteer. Tracy, who had served as the lay delegate to Annual Conference for thirteen out of fifteen years, was told that she needed to cycle off as per *The United Methodist Book of Discipline*. These changes were painful to the Zielinskis, but their primary ministry, The TBD Anime Club, was still alive and well.

The Zielinskis and a few mature Christians, continued to meet with non-Christian *anime* fans, living their lives openly before them and showing them Christian themes in something they love, using techniques and a language that was meaningful and understandable to them. For good or bad, for better or worse, the researcher was a broken and needy child of God who was willing to walk upon the path of life with other outcasts.

Without her painful experiences of feeling misunderstood, undervalued, unwanted, and unloved, the researcher would not have had the empathy to deal with Yuki, Jei, or

others like them. Nor would she have had the passion to do the work she now does. She is called to reconciliation—to reconcile a lost and disenfranchised generation of young adults, children of God who have been told that they were irrelevant to the professing community of Christ, but yearn to fill the God-shaped hole in their lives.

## Context of Ministry

### *Shepherd's Community in the South Lakeland Area*

Shepherd's Community United Methodist Church (SCUMC) in Lakeland, Florida is a mid-size congregation in the northwest corner of Polk County, bordered on the west by Hillsborough County and the northwest by Pasco County. It straddles suburban and rural communities. The Florida Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church provides a demographic service free of charge to any congregation within its boundaries from MissionInsite.<sup>2</sup>

In that five-mile radius, the population was reported to be 67,450 in 2013. Of that number 11,507 or 22.6% reported that they feel it is “Important to Attend Religious Services;” 9,854 or 19.4% said “My Faith is Really Important to Me;” 23,663 or 46.5% of persons “Considered Myself A Spiritual Person;” and 15,497 or 30.5% considered themselves a “Conservative Evangelical Christian.”<sup>3</sup>

In the Quadrenium ending in 2012, a sample of persons living in the area were polled about their beliefs and given a list of factors that are important in deciding not to

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<sup>2</sup>MissionInsite, is located at <http://missioninsite.com/> (accessed October 11, 2013). MissionInsite’s tagline is “Innovating the Standard in Church Demographics” and the date is based on information collected by the US Census Bureau, Synergos Technologies Inc., Experian, DecisionInsite/MissionInsite.

<sup>3</sup>Mission Insite, “The New ExecutiveInsite Report,” <http://www.missioninsite.com>, 15 (accessed October 11, 2013).

participate in a faith community. They separated the sample into two groups. The first group was known as the Outside: “The Outsider group are persons who most likely do not currently participate in any religious community.”<sup>4</sup> The second group is called the Inside: “The Inside group reflects persons who most likely do currently participate but considered discontinuing their involvement.”<sup>5</sup>

The reasons that resonated 60% or higher with The Outside are: “Religious people are too judgmental,” “Religion focuses too much on money,” and they “Don’t trust religious leaders.”<sup>6</sup> Other factors cited highly were: “Don’t trust organized religion,” “Disillusionment with religion,” and “Strict/inflexible views.”<sup>7</sup>

For The Inside, the 70% or higher answers on the same survey were: “Conflicts in religious community,” “Didn’t feel welcome/useful,” “Don’t trust religious leaders,” “Religion too focused on money,” “Religious people too judgmental,” and “Wasn’t supportive during crisis.”<sup>8</sup>

According to 2013 MissionInsite Executive Insite Report, the population in the five-mile radius around the church breaks down in the following ethnic background.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>MissionInsite, “The New Quadrennium Report,” <http://www.missioninsite.com>, 8 (accessed October 11, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> MissionInsite “Quadrennium,” 8.

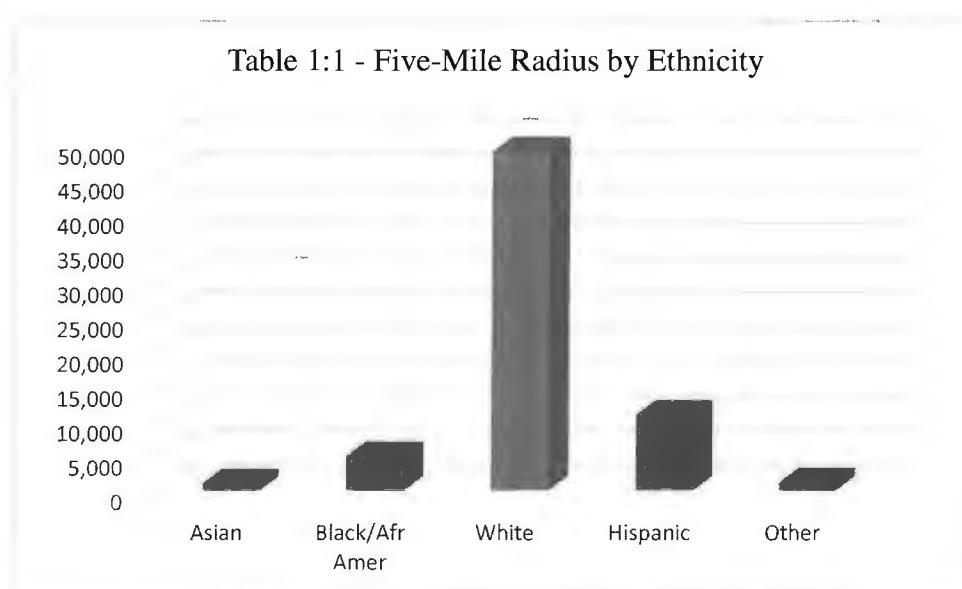
<sup>6</sup>MissionInsite “Quadrennium,” 8.

<sup>7</sup>MissionInsite “Quadrennium,” 8.

<sup>8</sup>MissionInsite “Quadrennium,” 9.

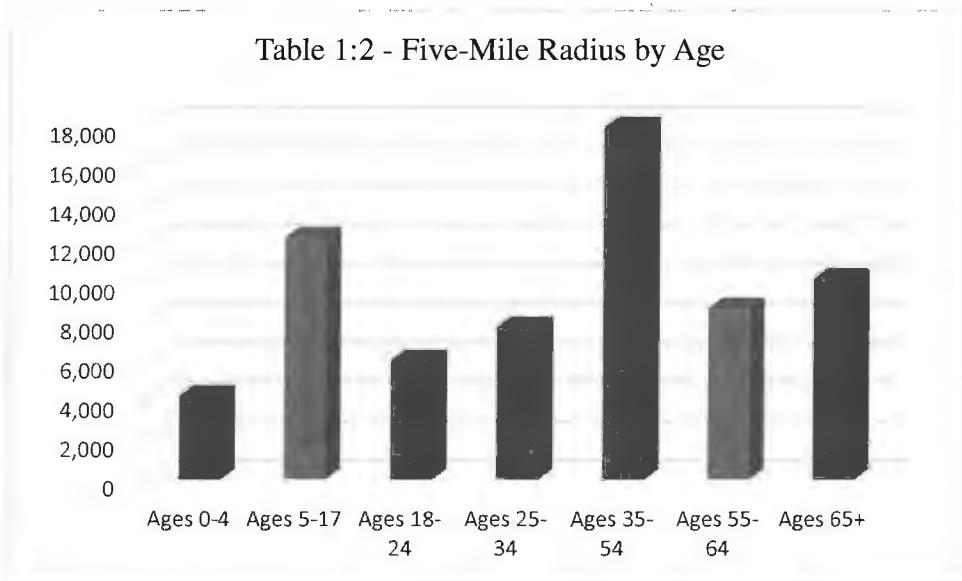
<sup>9</sup>MissionInsite, “ExecutiveInsite,” 3.

Table 1:1 - Five-Mile Radius by Ethnicity



The average age of the same area of Lakeland is 38.82 and breaks down the ages into the following groups<sup>10</sup>:

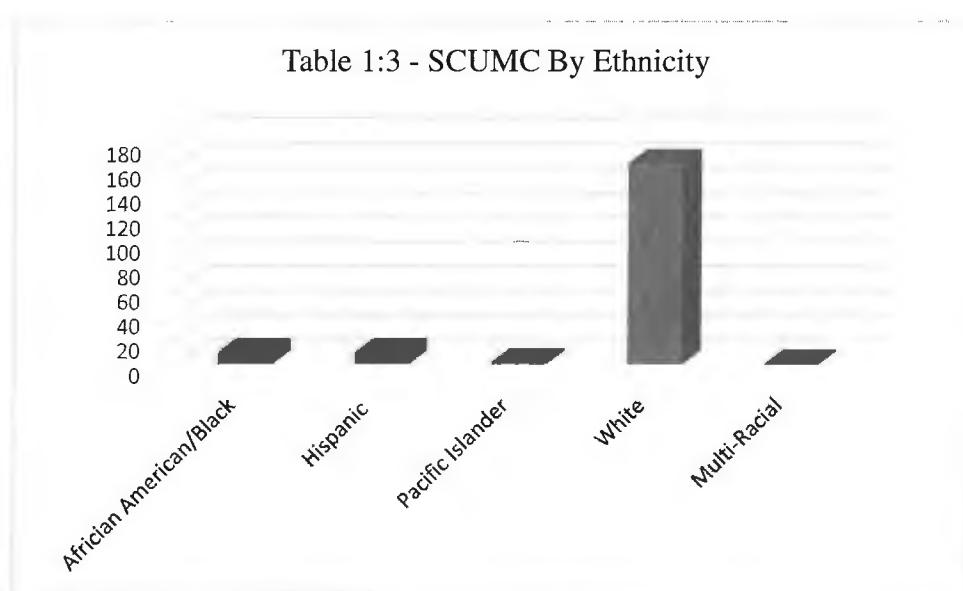
Table 1:2 - Five-Mile Radius by Age



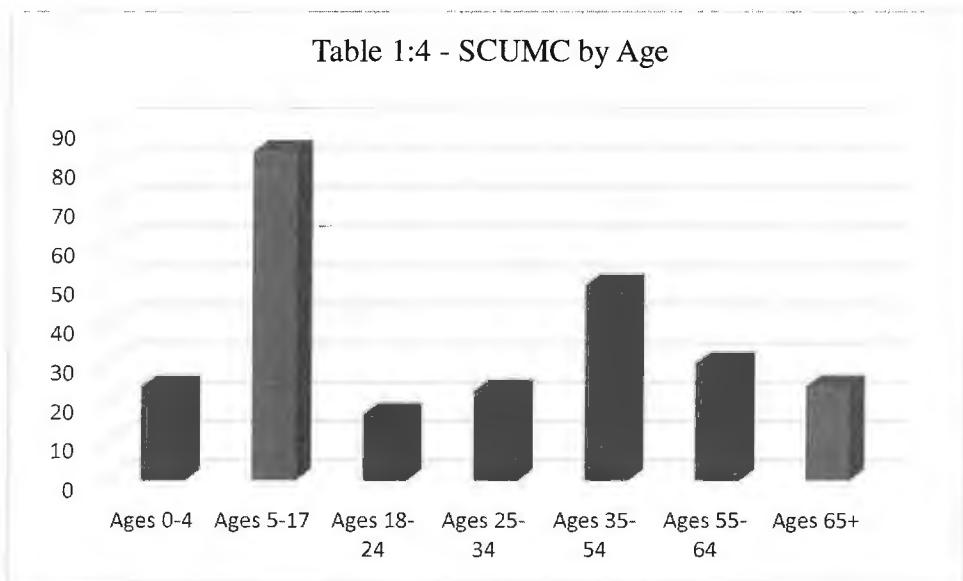
SCUMC's 2012 Year-End Statistical Report indicated that the total number of professing members was 185 and the charts below breakdown the ethnicity and age of those members.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup>MissionInsite, "ExecutiveInsite," 3, 4.

Table 1:3 - SCUMC By Ethnicity



The age breakdown (with 40 members or constituents unreported) is<sup>12</sup>:



SCUMC began as a new church in 1997, in an area of South Lakeland that was being newly developed. In 1990, 173,110 persons lived in the ten-mile radius of the church. In 2000, that number had increased over 20% to 193,617.

<sup>11</sup> Shepherd's Community United Methodist Church, "The 2012 Year-End Statistic Report." (Lakeland, FL: Florida United Methodist Church, 2013), 1.

<sup>12</sup>"Year-End Statistic Report," 1.

As of the 2012 census with an increase of over 17%, the population is 227,447. The area is estimated to grow by another 9% by 2016.<sup>13</sup> The closest United Methodist Church is in Mulberry, four miles. The church in Mulberry is in a small rural community, working class, with snowbirds and retirees, but very few professionals.<sup>14</sup> They are blended towards traditional with occasional forays into contemporary worship.<sup>15</sup>

The pastor appointed to SCUMC by the Bishop of the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church took on the challenge of starting this new congregation out of his home. His wife and three children, along with a small group of people, met at the parsonage until 1998, at which time they moved to Sikes Elementary School and began holding regular services, followed by a year sharing the campus of Christ United Methodist Church. In 2003, they moved into portable buildings on the current property. In 2004, they were promoted within the denomination from New Church Start to a United Methodist Church. The current building was dedicated in 2003.

SCUMC has always been made up of middle and upper-class professionals—partners in law firms, accountants, nurses, graphic designers, contractors, teachers, and the like. The average age has always been low, but has continued to move higher as the congregation moved from fledgling to established church. Shepherd's joined Christ United Methodist Church in a cooperative parish that lasted for three years and resulted

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<sup>13</sup>Mission Insite, “Quicksite,” <http://www.missioninsite.com>, 15 (accessed October 11, 2013).

<sup>14</sup>Snowbirds is a colloquial term used in Florida to refer to our winter residents. As it begins to snow up north, birds migrate to the south, in the same way that northern visitors live in Florida during the harsh winter months.

<sup>15</sup>Valarie Hattery, interview by author, Mulberry, FL, November 2, 2010.

in the closing of Christ United Methodist Church—much older congregation—and the assimilation of many of the former congregation's members.

## Clubs and Conventions

### *The TBD Anime Club*

The TBD Anime Club meets in one of the outside classrooms on the campus of SCUMC in Lakeland, Florida.<sup>16</sup> The group has been meeting once a month since January of 2009. The initial group was made up of the researcher and her husband, as well as three teenage boys, ages 15, 18, and 19. The impetus for the group's formation was a lack of *anime* clubs in the Lakeland area, and the fact that the researcher and the group were looking for somewhere to share their passion for the subject. In order to host the group on the campus of SCUMC, the small group had to incorporate a faith element and submit a syllabus including curriculum and goals. Although the leadership of SCUMC did not understand the medium, they were open to the curriculum and goals of the group, and allowed the use of the facility.

By March of 2009, the three boys began inviting their friends to the group, and a revolving group of young people, including high school and college students, began attending. Young adult professionals began to attend, and while evangelism was not the initial goal, it began to be an unexpected and pleasant result. Displays of spirituality are encountered in two separate ways: 1) every *anime* chosen was done so for the spirituality

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<sup>16</sup>The “To Be Decided” Anime Club was originally unnamed to allow the members to pick the name of the club. The TBD Anime Club was used as a placeholder on the Facebook® page until such time as the club made a decision. The members decided that “TBD” was an appropriate name because each month, the *anime* to be viewed would “decided.”

of the characters and story-lines, and 2) the Christians invited to join the group pledged to live authentically Christian lives in front of the participants of the group.

After the group began to experience small success, the leadership of SCUMC advertised the group on the church's official calendar, and more young adults and youth joined. The group swelled to include adults (33-60 year olds), post-college young adults, and high school-aged youth. Since its inception, The TBD Anime Club moved beyond the viewing nights by attending Japanese cultural events, *anime* conventions, and special live-action *anime* movie nights.

The first church-wide event in which The TBD Anime Club participated was Trunk-or-Treat, a recent trend used in faith communities as an alternative to Halloween trick-or-treat. Shepherd's Community began hosting this event in 2007, and in 2009, when the group participated, over 80 church members decorated their cars and provided candy for 1,000 community members. The church members lined the parking lot with cars, all facing outwards so that the trunks were facing in an open square. Each car, trunk open, was decorated with a different theme, i.e., Hawaiian, Under the Sea, Noah's Ark, as well as other commercial and non-commercial themes. The TBD Anime Club participated with a Japanese-themed car.

The club's participation hopefully showed the disaffected youth and young adults of The TBD Anime Club that church could be a positive experience. Many of these youth and young adults were raised in the church, but for one reason or another, had made a personal choice to leave organized religion. In *Christian Wisdom of the Jedi Masters*, author Dick Staub lists the four main reasons that young people no longer attend the Christian church of their roots:

“(1) they never experience God in their worship, (2) their tribal connections are stronger outside the church than in it, (3) the issues being discussed at church don't matter to them and the issues that matter to them aren't being discussed, and (4) they didn't see anything compelling enough in their parents' lives to make them follow a similar path.”<sup>17</sup>

The TBD Anime Club aims at these young people who were told, by religious figures, that they were not welcome in a church because of lifestyle choices: LGBTQ, self-injurers, Goths, skaters, and punks.<sup>18</sup> These are people that scare church members, even when they have grown up in a church environment. They are people who hunger to understand and to be understood.

#### *Stone Hill Science Fiction Association*

In the nearby Tampa Bay area, Ann and Kendall Morris began the Stone Hill Science Fiction Association to fill a void in the community in the fall of 1979.<sup>19</sup> It has been since its inception a group of like-minded individuals who love all kinds of different “nerdy” or “geeky” things, including science fiction, fantasy, and horror. The group consists of a wide variety of people from all ages, all situations and all walks of life. In a 2011, members included speech pathologists, archeologists, brain surgeons, rocket scientists, theme-park workers, physics professors, professional authors, counselors, information technology professionals, and students, just to name a few.

The group took its name from the Jules Verne novel *From the Earth to the Moon* (Verne, 1865) and refers to a location in Florida where The Gun Club attempts to fire a

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<sup>17</sup>Dick Staub, *Christian Wisdom of the Jedi Masters* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2005), xix-xx.

<sup>18</sup>LGBTQ – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning (sometimes Queer).

<sup>19</sup>StoneHill, “History,” <http://stonehill.org/stone.htm> (accessed October 2, 2010).

projectile from a cannon to the moon. As obscure references go, the name of the club is only one of many the club members enjoy.

Three years after its founding, Stone Hill began Necronomicon, billed as “Florida’s Science Fiction, Fantasy & Horror Convention.”<sup>20</sup> Proudly celebrating their 30th anniversary in 2011, Necronomicon draws hundreds of fans and renowned genre authors like Ben Bova and Timothy Zahn. Necronomicon is a convention that welcomes everyone who flaunts their geekiness or hides it away. Necronomicon is welcoming to people of all ages, including programming for young children and adult-only panels that require photo identification. In 1993, Stone Hill established its second convention VidCon (later renamed Southern Media Con) dedicated to fandom (fan fiction, fan videos, and related fields).<sup>21</sup>

Proceeds from Necronomicon go to the charity, Kids & Canines—“Believing in kids. Empowering lives. One dog at a time.”<sup>22</sup> The organization, which has been around since 1988, helps at-risk school kids by teaching them to train service dogs. Stone Hill also supports The Francis House, a respite center for people infected with HIV/AIDS with proceeds from auctions at Southern Media Con.

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<sup>20</sup>StoneHill. “Necromonicon,” <http://www.stonhill.org/necro.htm> (accessed October 2, 2010).

<sup>21</sup>Defined in *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* as: 1. All the fans (as of a sport) or 2. The state or attitude of being a fan. “Fandom.” <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fandom> (accessed January 28, 2013).

<sup>22</sup>Kids and Caines.org, “Kids and Canines” <http://www.kidsandcanines.org/> (accessed October 2, 2010).

### *MetroCon*

MetroCon boasts the title “Florida’s largest *Anime* convention.”<sup>23</sup> In 2003, the members of the on-line community *AnimeMetro* (membership over 5000 in 2011) came together to host its first *anime* convention. In 2005, MetroCon was dubbed the largest *anime* convention in Florida. MetroCon is a continuously evolving convention with panels such as The *Anime* Human Chess Match, Zombie Survival, Fantasy Masquerade, and live fire dancers. The convention is run by a younger crowd and caters to a younger audience—teens-twenties—and has hosted amazing *anime*-related talents like voice actors, artists, and J-Pop singers.<sup>24</sup>

### Synergy

Between November 2011 and April of 2012, *AnimeCons.com* lists 150 scheduled *anime*-related conventions in the world, 80% of which are in the United States.<sup>25</sup>

There is no accurate way to establish the average attendance of those 150 *anime* conventions, but a small convention can host as few as 57 people (Southern Media Con 2011) to as many as forty thousand. These figures do not take into account general conventions that attract *anime* fans, but are not specifically *anime*-themed such as San Diego Comic Con which has an attendance over 130,000.<sup>26</sup>

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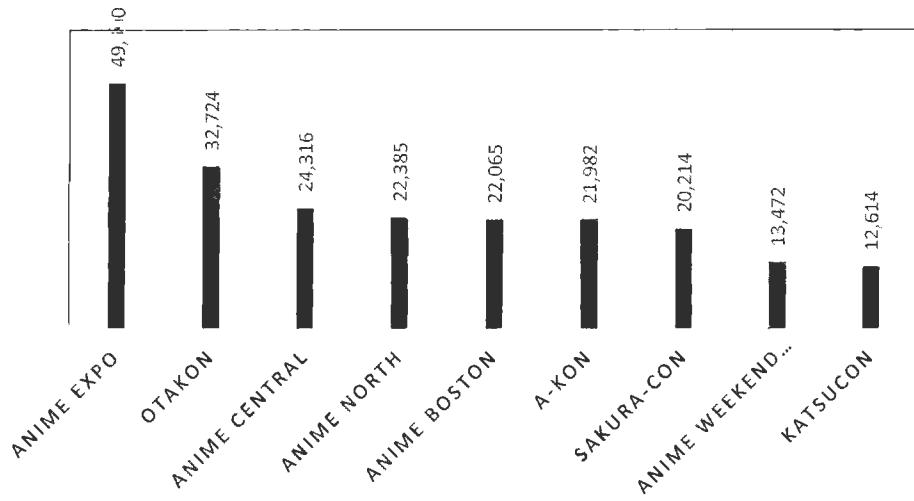
<sup>23</sup>“MetroCon is the self-proclaimed “Florida Largest *Anime* Convention. For more information on the convention, please refer to <http://www.metroconventions.com/.MetroCon>” <http://www.MetroConventions.com/control.cfm?ID=602> (accessed October 2, 2010).

<sup>24</sup>Japanese popular music.

<sup>25</sup>AnimeCons, “Convention Schedule,” <http://www.Animecons.com/events/calendar.shtml/0A0800799> (accessed October 10, 2010).

<sup>26</sup>Comic Con International, “Comic Con International,” <http://www.comic-con.org/about> (accessed September 3, 2013).

TABLE 1:5 - Anime Convention Attendance



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At any given convention, *Christians* show up and protest the fans, the genre, and the life-styles they think are associated with the fans. Little do they know that among attendees there are many authentic and spiritual Christians that differ in specific practice with the protesters. *Anime* fans, in general, are very tolerant seekers. They do not judge each other because of the *anime* or *manga*<sup>28</sup>. They are seeking to understand and to be understood.

In an interview included in the extra features of the 2012 Blu-ray release of *Hellsing Ultimate Vol. V-VIII*, voice actress K.T. Gray, speaks to this phenomenon:

They try wearing that costume like to school and chances are people are going to be confused and laugh at them and not understand them, “What are you dressed up as. What is that? And they can make fun of it and so they’ll get insecure so they might tuck away their admiration for anime and they just, it’s almost like this secret world that they hold to themselves. Then they come to like a convention or this forum of community that everybody not only appreciates them, doesn’t judge them, but it’s like “Whoa you came as blah, blah, blah, blah, and you look

<sup>27</sup>AnimeCon, “Ten largest North American anime conventions of 2012,” *AnimeCon* (January 7, 2013), [http://animecons.com/articles/article.shtml/1464/Ten\\_Largest\\_North\\_American\\_Anime\\_Conventions\\_of\\_2012](http://animecons.com/articles/article.shtml/1464/Ten_Largest_North_American_Anime_Conventions_of_2012) (accessed September 17, 2013).

<sup>28</sup>*Manga* is the print form of comics or graphic novels in Japan. They are often the basis from which *anime* is produced.

awesome. Can I take your picture?" And they're like "Yeah." And they're like "I feel like I found my group of people. They get me and they understand me and I'm not judged and I belong somewhere and these people understand me and there's that magic happening all the time at conventions.<sup>29</sup>

In 2011, Stone Hill sponsored a room all weekend at MetroCon and one of the panels was called "Western Mythology and Religion in *Anime* and *Manga*." The researcher served as one of three panelists, alongside a Buddhist and another Christian. At the beginning of the panel, the researcher asked the audience how they self-identified. Of those who answered, a smattering were Buddhists, a few Atheists, many former-Catholics, and a handful that referred to themselves as Christians. The lively discussion included on everything from Jewish symbolism in *Fullmetal Alchemist*, Muslim identity in *Gundam 00*, Christian themes in *Trinity Blood*, to the Norse pantheon in *Ah, My Goddess*. No one, Atheist to Christian, came away from the panel with anything but respect for the other viewpoints in the room. There was no name calling or hurt feelings; it was simply an interfaith dialogue.

Two other panels co-hosted by the researcher that weekend were, *Saiyuki* (1997-2004, 2007) and *Getbackers* (1999-2007). *Saiyuki* is a journey *anime* and *manga* (漫画) based on the Chinese tale of the Monkey King. It follows the story of four young men—a Buddhist priest, a half-demon bastard, a man who was turned into a demon as a punishment for his sins, and an incorrectly named demon who is in fact a god, banished from heaven, who has had all his memories sealed away as alternative to death.

The fandom of this *anime*, among which the researcher counted herself, loved the dynamics of the relationships, the contradiction of what was assumed behavior of a priest

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<sup>29</sup> Crispin Freeman, K.T. Gray, Victoria Hardwood, Tallesin Jaffe, Jonathon Klein, Ralph Lister, Patrick Seitz, "Participating in a Legend." (Disc 4. *Hellsing Ultimate, Volumes V-VIII*, English ed. Blu-ray. Directed by Tallesin Jaffe. Fort Worth, TX: FUNimation Entertainment), 2012.

or a demon and the reality. They loved the fact that the story is open-ended. The quest was to end the evil plague turning demons into evil beasts, but as of yet has not been completed, it was the journey that was the most important. Fans find themselves able to identify with the characters. In media and cultural studies, this phenomenon was known as parasocial relations, defined as “a type of intimate, friend-like relationship that occurs between a mediated persona and a viewer.”<sup>30</sup> For the researcher, the priest Sanzo was perhaps most sympathetic. He had studied and become a priest only to find that his faith did not change who he fundamentally was inside. Even though he was deeply faithful and believed in his mission, he had inner demons, a haunting past, and regrets. He did not keep the world at an arm’s length, sitting apart, and play-acting holy. He was side by side with others and actively involved with those around him, saving the lives of his friends, the people they met on the journey and even his enemies.

Sanzo was a great Buddhist equivalent to the Apostle Paul before his conversion. After Paul’s conversion to the Gospel, he did not change fundamentally; he was the same person with a different focus. He was deeply faithful while battling his inner demons, his past, and his regrets. He did not keep the world out, but welcomed them in, living with them, saving the lives of his followers and enemies.

*Getbackers* was a comedy, buddy adventure. Ginji and Ban run an agency that had an almost 100% success rate in retrieving things that were lost. From the mundane lost briefcase, or love letters, to the less tangible love and beauty, the *Getbackers* almost never failed to bring peace and hope to their clients. Peace and hope were a message that needed to be brought to disaffected youth and young adults. They saw so much despair in

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<sup>30</sup>Rebecca B. Rubin and Michael P. McHugh, “Development of Parasocial Interaction Relationships,” *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media Volume 31, No. 3* (1987): 279–292.

the world around them, they were influenced by a world that says that hope and peace were only a dream. The *Getbackers* can get back anything, even lost hope.

After attending Anime Festival Orlando in August of 2009, and going to the panel *How to Start An Anime Club*, the researcher did investigation on FUNimation.com and found even more tips. She checked out online resources and believed in the possibility of starting a small *anime* club, which she did.

The schedule for the first year was as follows:

Month	Theme	Anime	Episodes
January	Getting to Know You	None	None
February	No Greater Love	<i>Naruto</i>	18-19
March	Temptation	<i>Death Note</i>	1-2
April	Resurrection	<i>Fullmetal Alchemist</i>	1-3
May	Clergy	<i>Trinity Blood</i>	1-3
June	What Makes Us Human	<i>Appleseed</i>	All
July	Betrayal	<i>Bleach</i>	60-62
August	Vacation	None	None
September	Denominations	<i>Hellsing Ultimate</i>	1-2
October	Evil	<i>Blood: the Last Vampire</i>	All
November	The Soul	<i>Ghost in the Shell: SAC 2<sup>nd</sup> Gig</i>	25-26
December	Christmas in Japan	<i>Ghost Hunt</i>	12-13

**Table 1:6 – The TBD Anime Club Schedule**

What originally started out as a selfish personal interest, made the researcher think about how one lives out a Christian life in front of teenagers who are not interested in church. The church secretary began to advertise the club in the newsletter and suddenly parents were asking her about the club—would their children be welcome? Was it appropriate for all age groups?

The first member of the club, in addition to the researcher and her husband, was a high school senior, Daichi.<sup>31</sup> Then two brothers followed, Pazu and Byakuya, who joined after their mother told them about the club. Pazu and Byakuya rarely attended church, and when they did, it seemed merely as a personal favor to their mother. Over the course of the first year, two adults from the church joined and in the second year, members from Stone Hill Science Fiction Association and Tampa Japanese Meet-up joined.<sup>32</sup> Later in the second year, a mother from the church asked if her two teenage daughters could join. The club has hosted people from other churches seeking to learn more about how to evangelize to disaffected people.

What The TBD Anime Club did teach was that disaffected people need not fear the church. There was no one yelling at them, no one damning them, no one forcing religion on them. The club met together and watched *anime*. There was no need to say that Father Abel Nightroad of *Trinity Blood* was a Christ figure; the episodes portray Abel's qualities that reflected Jesus' story. It was up to the individual, if they wanted to, to make the connection. In the same way, the Christians in the club, lived out their lives, deliberately being Christ-like for the members so that they could find those connections.

The club traveled together to Japanese cultural festivals hosted by the Tampa Japanese Meet-Up group and dined out together. The club has also attended conventions together and continued to live out its life as a small community.

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<sup>31</sup>All names of members of The TBD *Anime* Club have been substituted with *Anime* character names of the same gender.

<sup>32</sup>Tampa Japanese Meet-Up is a group of enthusiasts that meet regularly to discuss their mutual love of the Japanese culture. For more information, please visit their website. <http://www.meetup.com/japanese-571/events/17316914/>.

In her article, “A Parent’s Guide to *Anime* Conventions,” Gale Ellis summed up why *anime* conventions (and as a smaller version of the same, *anime* clubs) were so important to the disaffected youth and young adult:

Attendance at these fan conventions can mean much more than simply sharing common interests. Due to the stereotypical notions of what is “cool” or not, many attendees of anime conventions have a hard time finding outlets to express their interests or else are ostracized by others for doing so. For these individuals, attending a convention can mean a rare opportunity to be accepted for who they are.<sup>33</sup>

After the first year together, the members began to ask for longer meetings, and since that time, either a full-length movie or five episodes (which averages to about 100 minutes) have been shown at each meeting.

In 2012, the researcher began involving the members in what has been referred to as *slacktivism*. Slacktivism was the hybrid of the words “slacker” and “activism.” The group chose a charity, The American Special Olympics Team, and donated My Coke Rewards™ points to support them. Up to that point, the researcher had chosen the *anime* to be viewed, but she ran a contest allowing members who donated the most points to pick the next *anime*. The competition among the members was healthy, and it worked so well that she extended the contest for a second month. The members picked two wonderfully varied *anime*, and the researcher was very proud that they choose shows that would be of interest to the entire group and contained appropriate themes.

The researcher’s next opportunity to speak at a convention came in 2011, when she joined members of StoneHill at MetroCon where the group sponsored an entire room

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<sup>33</sup>Ellis, Gale, “A Parent’s Guide to *Anime* Conventions.” (no publication date), [http://Animecons.com/articles/article.shtml/1074/A\\_Parents\\_Guide\\_to\\_Anime\\_Conventions](http://Animecons.com/articles/article.shtml/1074/A_Parents_Guide_to_Anime_Conventions) (accessed January 9, 2012).

for Science Fiction/fandom panels.<sup>34</sup> She was one of three panelists on the *Western Culture and Religion in Anime*. She was a panelist on *Pet Peeves in Fandom and Women in Science Fiction* where she contributed her knowledge of *anime* to each discussion. The same year at Necromonicon convention, the researcher led *Religion and Anime* and was a panelist on several *anime* series-related panels.

Also in 2012, she moved from panelist to host in two panels for StoneHill's MetroCon room: *OMG! My Kid's Are Watching Anime* and *Religion and Anime*. Then at Necromonicon, she repeated *OMG!* and took part on a panel called *Genre and Religion* that was hosted by acclaimed science fiction author, Timothy Zahn.

The panel format allowed people in the audience to ask questions. During the discussion, a woman in the audience asked how each panelist felt about the Church of Jedi, an actual group of people who have dedicated their lives to living out the philosophy of Jedi from *Star Wars*.<sup>35</sup> These people have listed Jedi as their religion on census forms and been reported in the media.<sup>36</sup> The researcher stated that any honest attempt at spirituality was a sign of an inward need, a longing for the soul, and an understanding of truth. The researcher has no issues with Church of Jedi. This woman found the researcher's answer about the Church of Jedi uplifting and positive. Instead of condemning or devaluing people who seek spirituality in unorthodox ways, she found a positive spin and gave Christians everywhere a less judgmental reputation, at least in the

<sup>34</sup>The totality of the thing of which a person is a fan. For instance, the Star Trek fandom includes the entirety of the fictional canon of Star Trek (television episodes, movies, books, comics, etc.).

<sup>35</sup>The Temple of the Jedi Order, <http://www.templeofthejediorder.org>. (accessed December 6, 2012).

<sup>36</sup>“World Briefing: Europe: Britain: The Jedi Stand, And They're Counted,” *The New York Times* (February 14, 2003), <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/14/world/world-briefing-europe-britain-the-jedi-stand-and-they-re-counted.html>. (accessed December 6, 2012).

minds of the panel attendees. One person at a time, one counter to the perceived bad reputation of Christianity at a time, such action can lead people everywhere to the redeeming power and grace of Jesus Christ.

After the panel was over and the convention wound down with an “Eye Scream Social,” the researcher was walking away from the ice cream station when a participant in *Genre Religion* approached her. The woman asked the researcher about her seminary: where it was and what programs it offered. The researcher gladly shared that information. The woman then told the researcher that she had not been enjoying the panel until the researcher had started using examples from *anime* because she had not read any of the books the authors were speaking about and felt *lost* in the conversation.

At the 2013 Metrocon, the author hosted a panel for *anime* fans called *My Parents Just Don’t Understand*. The discussion began by encouraging the young people in the audience to share their experience and hopefully learn from each other. Topics started with the light-hearted question, “How do I tell my father that I’m a Brony?”<sup>37</sup> Later a young man, dressed as LeLouch Lamperouge from *Code Geass*, shared a heart-rending story of the day his father found a *manga* (漫画) in his backpack:<sup>38</sup>

He called me a fag, but I told him I liked girls. He told me it didn’t matter, if I like this [expletive redacted], then I was a fag. When I told him I didn’t care what he thought, he beat the [expletive redacted] out of me.<sup>39</sup>

Unfortunately, this was not an isolated event, but one that resonated with other people attending the panel. The author hosted panels intended for youth whose parents do

<sup>37</sup>A Brony is a male fan of the American cartoon *My Little Pony*.

<sup>38</sup>Where ever possible, the English titles of all *Anime/Manga* will be used for the purpose of clarity to a Western audience.

<sup>39</sup>Tracy Zielinski, “My Parents Just Don’t Understand” (lecture, Metrocon, Tampa, FL, July 27, 2013).

not understand their passion for *anime*, as well as for parents who want to understand. As such, the inspiration for this project was to reach a different community: church-going adults who want to reach out, possibly evangelize, but also understand the people in their lives who have such a strong passion for *anime* and *manga*. A collective term for people with such a passion is *otaku* (おたく).<sup>40</sup>

Depending on physical location, economic situation, and availability, the average con-goer may attend three or four conventions in a season. Metrocon occurs once a year, always in the summer months, always in Tampa, Florida. In the United States, during any given year there were more than 100 conventions taking place from the smallest gatherings of friends to world-renowned events like San Diego Comic Con. Convention attendance was, at most, an occasional thing, even to the most ardent of fans.

In order to make a more concerted effort to reach people for the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the author turned her attention to create a curriculum-based program that would use empathy as a starting point to begin a conversation with open-minded adults who love outsiders, and facilitate their ability to converse in their native language.

Byakuya, a member of The TBD Anime Club, was in the parking lot having a discussion with his brother, the researcher, and her husband. The topic shifted between the four of them from *anime* to car repair and suddenly Byakuya said he had not been in church for five years. His brother, Pazu, corrected him, reminding that they had attended a Baptist church on Easter of that year. Byakuya remarked that the church had condemned him to Hell because he plays video games.

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<sup>40</sup>An Otaku, for the sake of this paper refers to an *Anime* fan. In Japan the term is pejorative meaning an *Anime* fan who is obsessed with *Anime* to the detriment of all other aspects of life, such as work, family and responsibilities. American fans have claimed the term and redeemed it, giving it a positive connotation.

Pazu went on to say that after an hour-long altar call, he and Byakuya tried to leave only to find that the doors were locked. An usher escorted them into an office where they were required to pray with an elder and sign the church membership rolls before they would be allowed to leave. Pazu, who was in his early twenties at the time was responsible for his younger, high school aged brother, so he wrote out false names and contact information for them in order to get free. While not all churches kidnap potential parishioners, even one church that condemns and pronounces a person damned for playing a video game can turn young seekers away from God.

Neurologist and neuroscientist, Marco Iacoboni described, on a physical level, why media (including *anime* or video games) was a good vehicle to help people make connections: “Why do we give ourselves over to emotion during carefully crafted, heartrending scenes in certain movies [or *anime*]?”<sup>41</sup> Because mirror neurons in our brain re-create for us the distress we have seen on the screen. We have empathy for the fictional characters – we know how they’re feeling ourselves.”<sup>42</sup> *Anime* fans have long realized that they empathize with the characters they love. This was self-evident in such things as cosplay (コスプレ) and fan-videos as seen on YouTube.<sup>43</sup> Their connection to the character was a first level connection. They have a second level connection with other people who shared the same love/fascination with the characters and upon meeting, and they could easily form a new first level connection.

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<sup>41</sup>This is the researcher’s addition, not part of the original quote.

<sup>42</sup>Marco Iacoboni, *Mirroring People: The New of How We Connect With Other* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008), 4.

<sup>43</sup>Cosplay is a combination of the words costume and play. Cosplay is an artistic expression in which fans dress like and act like a character. A practitioner of cosplay is a cosplayer.

After nine weeks, the participants of the researcher's *Anime Spirituality* class had experienced a wide range of characters and situations that allowed them to build new empathetic bridges to people with whom they once felt they had nothing in common. Whether they were able to feel Abel Nightroad's self-sacrifice, Naruto's righteous anger, Fuu's skepticism, Wolfwood's regret, Tohru's loyalty, or the Major's pangs of first love lost, the participants became more aware of what drew fans to this outsider medium. It taught them that the spiritual motifs within were perfect starters for a deeper and more meaningful spiritual conversation.<sup>44</sup>

Ian Condry, Associate Professor of Comparative Media Studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, spoke about the way that *anime* conventions facilitate conversations:

Dressing as a character, sometimes performing *in character*, is rewarded by the attention one receives. Fan conventions are a space where dressing up is *appreciated* - note the language of value - in terms of an ethic that accords status to do-it-yourself costumes above store-bought wear. We shouldn't underestimate the value of cosplay as a social lubricant, as well. Fan conventions are certainly about a love for anime, but that frisson of excitement around flirting with others often seems to be an important part of the scene. Costumes facilitate conversation, acting as a visual celebration of alliance with specific worlds of anime fandom but also working as an ice breaker for people who haven't met. Even for people unaccustomed to the thrill of cosplay as practitioners, it is easy to observe and feel the energy at an anime convention.<sup>45</sup>

Though the thrill of cosplay was not necessary for true understanding of the participants, empathy was required. In *Empathy Gap*, J.D. Trout, Professor of Philosophy and Psychology at Loyola University, discussed the varied definitions of empathy. Trout

<sup>44</sup>The characters are from the following *Anime*, respectively: *Trinity Blood*, *Naruto*, *Samurai Champloo*, *Trigun*, *Fruits Basket* and *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex: 2<sup>nd</sup> Gig*.

<sup>45</sup>Ian Condry, *The Soul of Anime: Collaborative Creativity and Japan's Media Success Story* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 2013), 25.

quoted Thomas Aquinas' definition of empathy as "the heartfelt sympathy for another's distress, impelling us to succor him if we can."<sup>46</sup>

### **Christian vs *Otaku***

What makes *otaku* different from other outsiders of the Christian church? A comprehensive comparison of *otaku* to Christianity proves instructive, providing a better understanding of *otaku*.

#### *Sacred Spaces*

The most sacred space for Christians is the church, or in a wider venue, a convention, like the United Methodist Annual Conference, where large groups of related churches meet. Other sacred spaces include workshops and Christian music concerts, such as *Acquire the Fire* (a youth conference) or *Rock the Universe* (at Universal Studios, Florida).

*Otaku*, on the other hand, have sacred space at fan club meetings or *anime* conventions, where the individual panels would be the equivalent of a Sunday school class.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>J.D. Trout, *The Empathy Gap: Building Bridges to the Good Life and the Good Society* (New York, NY: Viking, 2009), 21.

<sup>47</sup>A panel is a gathering at a convention that deals with a specific topic. Panels are usually an hour to two hours long and can be comprised of many different formats such as: discussion groups, lectures, trivia, video viewing or hands-on workshops.

### *Sacred Text*

The sacred text of Christianity is the Holy Bible, while commentaries, biblical dictionaries, and academic works broaden the Christian's understanding. *Otaku* sacred texts are *manga* or a Light Novel (ライトノベル).<sup>48</sup> *Otaku* refer to artbooks, character guides, forums, and fanfiction to broaden their understanding.<sup>49</sup>

### *Sacred Languages*

The sacred languages of Christians begin with their native language, but also include, Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. Often Christians speak a syncretized conglomerate of multiple theological, creedal, or liturgical languages, a certain Christian-ese that excludes the outsider.

*Otaku* also start with their native language, quickly learning to incorporate Japanese words and phrases into their everyday conversation. Like the Christian, this can also exclude the novice or outsider. A secondary value of language would be in subtitled and dubbed *anime*. Subtitles are a direct translation of the Japanese language displayed across the bottom of the *anime* while presented. Dubbed *anime* is a regional translation of the original Japanese into the native spoken dialogue. *Otaku* often speak a third level of sacred language—the *nerd* or *geek* speak that excludes those who do not also identify as such. Spoken in quotes or obscure references, heavy jargon, and the use of acronyms, this hybrid language is perhaps the most difficult to understand.

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<sup>48</sup>Light Novels are the Japanese equivalent of American Young Adult (YA) literature and are typically the length of a novella (40,000-50,000 words in length). *Anime* are often produced using the storyline of Light Novels.

<sup>49</sup>An artbook, in the *Anime* sense of the word, means a limited edition book with original artwork, conceptual sketches and poster art from an *Anime* that may or may not be available in other forms. Fanfiction is an artistic expression in which fans author non-canonical fiction about their favorite character.

### *Sacred Vestments*

The sacred vestments of Christians includes wearing one's Sunday best to service, cross jewelry, head attire (varied by denominations), and, for authority figures such as pastors and other worship leaders, attire such as albs, cassocks, and chasubles. The sacred vestments of *otaku* vary by fandom, but include cosplay costumes, cat-eared headbands, tails, weapons, character t-shirts, wigs and other accessories.

### *Sacred Music*

The sacred music of the Christian comes from far afield, Mozart, Charles Wesley, Third Day or Skillet. Whether classical, traditional or contemporary, the music reflects and helps to form the faith of the Christian. The sacred music of *otaku* comes in a wide variety as well: from the *Cowboy Bebop*'s jazz by Yoko Kanno to the *Samurai Champloo*'s hip-hop of Nujabes, *Texhnolyze*'s rock anthem by Gackt, and *Kamisama Dolls* samba by Chiaki Ishikawa, every genre of international music is recognized and accepted as appropriate.

### *Sacred Loyalty*

The sacred loyalty of a Christian is usually defined by membership in a denomination or parish: United Methodist, United Church of Christ, American Baptist, Lutheran, Catholic, et cetera. The sacred loyalty of *otaku* comes from their fandom and can be primary, secondary and tertiary. An example would be a fan of the director Hayao Miyazaki. If he is the person of primary fandom, secondary levels might be his individual movies, *Spirited Away* or *Princess Mononoke*. For the third level of fandom, these fans may enjoy the work of other similar directors. Some *otaku* are only interested in a

particular *anime* and so they stop at one level and do not engage in any cross fandoms.

Some *otaku* have very strong fandom loyalty; if they like *Naruto*, they would feel disloyal if they also like *Bleach*. Other fans find no such emotional disloyalty and find their fandom encompasses things on a broader spectrum like works from a genre, director, or production company.

### *Sacred Meal*

The sacred meal of the Christian is Communion; the act of breaking of the bread and the drinking of the wine, which reminds the participant not only of the final meal that Jesus shared with His disciples, but also of the many meals he shared in common with them during their ministry. These meals included everything from Jesus' first miracle at the wedding feast, to the two accounts of the feeding of the many, to the Last Supper. While eating and drinking with friends was not something unique, a new believer must be initiated into the mystery and significance of the Holy meal.

The sacred meal of *otaku* includes a myriad of foods, some as normal as pizza and burgers sold at convention concession stands to the more exotic fare of Ramen noodles, Pocky, and Ramune (ラムネ).<sup>50</sup> Most Americans are familiar with Ramen noodles and Cup of Soup noodles commercially available in any grocery store. Add to that, dessert in the form of Pocky, a biscuit stick dipped in chocolate (or other flavors), and a drink called Ramune, and the meal is complete.

First-time drinkers of Ramune have to be shown how to open the bottle, which is sealed by a marble and they may find drinking around the marble (which continues to

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<sup>50</sup>Ramune is a popular carbonated beverage of Japan that is widely available in the United States in Asian markets, online, or at Anime conventions.

float in the beverage after it is removed from the opening) difficult. Most first-time drinkers must be initiated into the mystery of Ramune.

### *Degrees of Otaku*

Catechumenate – The novice *otaku* has watched their first complete *anime*; they may or may not know what *manga* is; they may be interested in joining a club or attending a convention; and they may be able to say “hello” and “thank you” in Japanese.

Member – The member *otaku* has watched ten or more complete *anime*; they may go to at least one convention each year or belong to a club or forum; they have a list of TBW (or To Be Watched) *anime* and they are actively working through it; they have an opinion of which is better subbed (subtitled) or dubbed; they own *anime*-related merchandise (such as calendars, plushies, DVDs, CDs, jewelry); they may have made at least one cosplay costume or have decided that cosplay is not right for them; they may have learned phrases or words in Japanese; and they may be able to eat with chopsticks.<sup>51</sup>

Saint – Above and beyond the member, an *otaku* saint remembers when *anime* was only available subbed on VHS; they have a closet full of cosplay costumes or t-shirts of their favorite *anime*; they can carry on a conversation in Japanese; they are a staff member for one or more convention; and they have won a contest at a convention.

Celebrity – an *otaku* celebrity, above and beyond the saint, is compensated for his/her participation in a convention, or they have an established and growing fan-following on social media, or they host conventions, or they are voice actors, musicians, or writers/directors/producers who work directly in the field of *anime* or *manga*, or they are any combination of the above.

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<sup>51</sup>A plushie is like a stuffed animal, but may be any *Anime* character, animal, human or machine.

### *Mimesis and Cosplay*

Mimesis (μίμησις), the Greek word meaning to imitate, manifests in the *otaku* community through Cosplay. Cosplay, the portmanteau of costume and play, is a performance art form of dressing like one's favorite character, embodying not only the physical traits, but the *oeuvre* of the reality in which the character exists.

Fans act as their normal self, at work or at home, but at conventions and with other like-minded individuals, they enter the world of mimetic legacy and become someone else. For instance, at Metrocon 2013, the Dr. Who panel was attended by at least twenty people dressed as The Doctor, along with a myriad of their companions. The costume of the Doctor allowed them to step outside of themselves and become something extraordinary, something other than their daily self.

Mimesis, or mimicry, is commonplace in the stories of *anime*. *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children* featured a series of characters who were, in one form or another, a mimetic legacy of other deceased characters. Brothers Kadaj, Loz, and Yazoo were physical manifestations of the deceased Sephiroth, and through their loyalty and sacrifice, Sephiroth was returned from the dead when he possessed Kadaj. Cloud, the protagonist, was the mimetic legacy of Zack Fair who had died to rescue Cloud. Cloud made a promise to live out both their lives: “I am your living legacy.”<sup>52</sup> When Cloud defeated Sephiroth at the end of the movie, he says, “Stay where you belong; in my memories.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>Tetsuya Nomura, *Final Fantasy Advent Children Complete*, Blu-Ray (Shinjuku, Tokyo, Japan: Square Enix, 2009).

<sup>53</sup>Nomura, *Final Fantasy*.

In the series, *Karas*, Otoha was a doomed young man who was the product of his violent upbringing in the *Yakuza* (ヤクザ)<sup>54</sup>. All he has known is violence as an assassin and enforcer in his father's gang. Otoha tried to run away, but was gunned down by his own organization. Otoha survived, but could not remember who he was or what had happened to him. He created a new life as a doctor. He imitated those he yearned to become. Even when he remembered his legacy, his conversion into a new person had already been completed, as represented by his physical transformation into a *Karas*, or *mecha* (メカ) <sup>55</sup> protector of the city.

A casual viewer of *Uta no Prince-Sama* (seasons one and two) might misjudge the campy musical as a silly, romantic comedy about high school students training to become pop stars. What that surface viewing misses are the deeper issues of memory and how they guide a person's future.

Jingūji Ren, for example, was the youngest son of a famous pop star and her husband, a famous business man. When Ren's mother died, his father attempted to erase all traces of her from the family's lives. When Ren found a VHS tape of his mother performing, he watched it proudly, but his father stormed in and destroyed the tape. The young Ren asked his father, "Papa, why do you hate Mama?"<sup>56</sup> His father growled, but gave no answer. Fast forward to high school, Ren was forced by his older brother to attend music school to become a pop star and represent the family business. Forgetting

<sup>54</sup>The organized crime syndicate of Japan, similar to the western concept of Mafia.

<sup>55</sup>*Mecha* are robots piloted by humans.

<sup>56</sup>*Uta no Prince-Sama Maji Love 1000%*, "Believe Heart to the End of the World," episode 4, May 15, 2013 (originally aired May 15, 2013).

why he loved music, he was in danger of being expelled. Ren's friends reminded him that his passion for music comes from his mother.

Inchinose Tokiya was a classmate of Ren. He was an established pop star, known as Hayato, but he enrolled in school disguised as his own twin brother. As Hayato, he was unfulfilled because his agency wanted him to abandon music and focus on other media. Tokiya wanted to get back to his true passion, music, and to do so, he thought he must completely erase his past.

Another student, Natsuki Shinomiya, was a cheerful, happy young man who loved cute things. He was an average student who played the viola and was also seeking to be a pop star. Natsuki, however, hid a deep secret from his past. As a child he was a musical prodigy and was betrayed (and possibly abused) by his violin teacher who stole his composition and passed it off as her own, becoming famous world-wide. As a result, Natsuki developed Dissociative Identity Disorder (called Gemini Syndrome in the show). His other personality, Satsuki was a violent, angry musical genius. Satsuki stepped in whenever Natsuki removed his glasses and he took over in order to protect Natsuki from physical or emotional danger. Natsuki does not know of Satsuki's existence, but through his music, he sensed that there had always been someone looking after him.

*Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children. Karas, and Uta no Prince-sama* share common themes even though they come from disparate corners of the *anime* universe. Fans from each series spend time, money, and passion transforming themselves into their favorite characters, and as such participate in their own mimesis with the characters, much like Christians can take on the character or quality of Christ through their Baptism:

To become Christian is to receive a new identity. You no longer allow others to tell you who you are. Christ now claims you and instructs you. A Christian is one

who has “thrown off the old-self and put on Christ.” Baptism celebrates becoming that new person and outwardly identifies us as a follower of Jesus. Through a washing with water, an anointing with oil, and a laying on of hands, baptism marks us and claims us as a child of God and heir to the Kingdom. This mark is an indelible reminder and a tangible sign of God’s love and claim upon our life, forever.<sup>57</sup>

In the *otaku* world, fans from *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children* strive to become a hero like Cloud, who fought to protect others and earn forgiveness for their memories. Fans of *Karas*, struggle to become like Otoha and break away from their past to become healers and protectors. Fans of *Uta no Prince-sama*, endeavor to become like the handsome Ren and find inspiration in the painful times of their childhood.

Many examples exist of *anime* characters who imitate or mimic other character. The *tachikoma*, or artificial intelligent robots in *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex* want more than anything to understand what it is to be human. To that end, they have imitated human behavior to the amusement of the human characters of the show and the audience. When they sacrificed their existence at the end of the second season to save their human handlers, and all of Japan, they finally understood what it meant to have a soul.

Sousuke Sagara of *Full Metal Panic*, was a sixteen year-old solider who had fought against terrorism since being orphaned. He was sent undercover to protect a high school student and learned to imitate what a normal sixteen year-old should be, and through his mimicry, he began to heal.

Kise of *Kuroko no Basuke* was a basketball player from the Generation of Miracles whose talent was mimicry. He was able to reproduce any skill he saw just once, but was considered by his fellow players to be less of a player, because he did not obtain

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<sup>57</sup>Mark C. Trotter, “A United Methodist Understanding of Baptism.” *The United Methodist Church* (2001), <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/baptism> (accessed January 5, 2014).

his skills with practice and hard work. Kise learned that being a mimic is not always a good thing.

Countless examples abound, but fans of *anime* are exposed to the concept of putting on another person's identity early in their fandom. Not only does the *otaku* have a one-on-one with the mimetic legacy of a character or a fandom, but like Christians becoming a part of a great community (or the great cloud of witnesses), they become part of a large experiential world. Through personal experience and observation, it is the researcher's opinion that there are four main reasons *otaku* wear costumes and imitate others:

1. The character is someone to admired as a hero or an inspiration.
2. The character is sufficiently generic that anyone can imitate them without much effort.
3. The person wearing the costume looked like the character, sharing many physical commonalities.
4. The character being portrayed allows the wearer to become something that they, themselves would be unable to achieve in the real world. For example, many women dress up as men, not as a statement that they wish to be a male, but that they would like to experience something completely opposite of themselves with no consequences. A person could be shy and retiring in real life and brave and bold in costume.
5. The character's costume allows the wearer to hide within. From full-bodied costumes to simple masks, this could be an extension of number 4.

Clothes, physical or spiritual, make the Christian or the *otaku* who they were. Religious orders and communities are known for their dress, such as the Amish Community, Hasidic Judaism, Islam, *et cetera*.

In her book, *Fashion and Its Social Agendas*, Diana Crane said: “One of the most visible markers of social status and gender and therefore useful in maintaining or subverting symbolic boundaries, clothing is an indication of how people in different eras have perceived their positions in social structures and negotiated status boundaries.”<sup>58</sup>

*Otaku* are similarly known for their fashion. The Homestuck community wears blue/gray face paint and candy-corn-colored horns; *Bleach* devotees wear black uniform of a Soul Reaper; *Samurai Champloo* fans may wear kimono or samurai garb; fans of *Naruto* may stealthily clothe themselves in Ninja uniforms. *Otaku*, therefore, are able to easily identify those with whom they have much in common. Crane, who called this act “decoding,” said that: “Some clothing codes are understood primarily by those who share the same identities and are opaque to outsiders. Women and minorities appear to be more skillful ‘decoders’ than white men.”<sup>59</sup>

When approaching another *Otaku*, the comfort level rises when they see their passion reflected back to them in the fashion choices of their peers. According to her article, “Body Language: Clothing Ourselves and Others,” Stephanie Paulsell talked about the way identifying with a group in fashion terms gives the wearer security: “In my

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<sup>58</sup>Diana Crane, *Fashion and Its Social Agendas: Class, Gender, and Identity in Clothing* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1.

<sup>59</sup>Crane, *Fashion and Its Social Agendas*, 244.

high school, brand names, styles of clothes and certain color combinations distinguish preppies from potheads from jocks.”<sup>60</sup>

Tattoos and piercings have a similar role of identifying the passions of those who choose to adorn themselves. *Otaku* and Christians alike may mark themselves to show a deeper commitment to what they love. Whether the tattoo is a small Celtic cross, the Blessed Virgin, or Pikachu from Pokemon, a permanent display is a way of setting down roots in the culture: “having one’s eyebrow, lip, tongue, navel or genitals pierced is a way claiming alternative space in the culture, of setting oneself apart from the mainstream.”<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>Stephanie Paulsell, “Body Language: Clothing Ourselves and Others,” *Christian Century* (January 2002): 19.

<sup>61</sup>Pausell, “Body Language,” 19.

## CHAPTER TWO

### STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY MODEL

Reaching out to disenfranchised youth and young adults and re-engaging them with the Gospel of Jesus Christ using *anime* required a synthesis of three major literary disciplines: Academic and historical works on *anime*, as well as *manga*, its written counterpart; media ministry studies; and missional/evangelism studies on youth and young adults. The synthesis of these three areas has been, until this time, largely ignored in most academic fields.

#### *Anime and Manga*

The first of important historical works on *anime* (and *manga*) is Jonathan Clements and Helen McCarthy's 2001 work, *The Anime Encyclopedia: A Guide to Japanese Animation Since 1917*, and its 2006 revision. Before that, very little was written about *anime* in the United States. *Anime* was a fringe cultural movement and was, in the minds of many, equivalent to America's Saturday morning cartoons.<sup>1</sup> As the popularity of *anime* grew in the 1990s and 2000s, a surge of literature concerning the subject began. *The Anime Encyclopedia* was little more than a viewer's guide—a reference intended for *anime* fans—that listed every major *anime* released in the United States. Each listing was a few paragraphs long and included basic information such as year of release, director, number of episodes and approximate length.

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<sup>1</sup>Mark Steven Dmochowski and Roy Harms, "Anime Timeline." (lecture, Necromonicon, St. Petersburg, FL, October 27, 2012).

*Anime Explosion! The What? Why? & Wow! of Japanese Animation* came out in 2002 as a primer to all things *anime*, both for fans and those on the outside of the fandom. It explained the main tropes of *anime*: *Mecha*, talking animals, *samurai* (侍) and *geisha* (芸者), high school students, and orphans, as well as general concepts such as reincarnation, homosexuality, and war.<sup>2</sup>

In 2004, Fred Patten edited a collection of essays entitled *Watching Anime, Reading Manga: 25 Years of Essays and Reviews*. Some of the essays dated back to the 1980s, while others look back retrospectively to the 1970s, when *anime* first began to come to the attention of some Western fans. *Watching Anime, Reading Manga* was a disparate collection that, in many ways, reflected the entire body of work related to the academic study of *anime* and *manga*. Some of the more interesting essays included: a reprint of an article first published in San Diego Comic Con's Program Book (1984); an editorial published in 1994's *StarQuest*; a timeline included in *The Complete Guide to Anime* (1997) [now out of print]; liner notes from the CD *The Best Anime Music* (1998); and articles from the fan magazines *Newtype* (2003), *Animation World Magazine* (2003) and *Protoculture Addicts* (1998).

The next major work to be published was *Japanamerica: How Japanese Pop Has Invaded the U.S.* by Ronald Kelts in 2006. A lecturer at the University of Tokyo, Kelts, in an in-depth study of the phenomenon of *anime* and its culture, launched his research from both worldviews – Japanese and American. He explored how two very different cultures were drawn together over their mutual love of the medium. This work spent a great deal

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<sup>2</sup>*Samurai* were the warrior class of citizens of Japan in the medieval and early modern periods. *Geisha* are traditional female entertainers skilled in various disciplines including music, dance, and tea ceremonies. *Geisha* should not be mistaken for prostitutes or courtesans.

of time debating the difference between the casual fan and the hard-boiled fan, or *otaku*, and their significance to the broader culture.<sup>3</sup>

In 2007, *One Thousand Years of Manga*, by Brigitte Koyama-Richard, became one of the first western works to investigate the roots of *Manga*. This history shows that the first recognizable *manga* dates back to twelfth-century scrolls and that the art form has made significant contributions to politics, social studies, economics, and history in Japan. The book included beautiful illustrations and gave the modern fan a perspective on the beloved media.

*From Impressionism to Anime: Japan as Fantasy and Fan Cult in the Mind of the West* (2007), by Susan J. Napier, Professor of Japanese Studies at Tuft University, built upon the foundation laid by the previous authors. Napier provided an historical analysis of the way the West and Japan have interacted in the broader arts, and then narrowed the field to *anime*. She focused on the aesthetic aspects of the imagination, escapism, and experimentation.

Three college professors combined their love of *anime* with their love of science fiction and edited *Robot Ghosts Wired Dreams: Science Fiction from Origins to Anime* (2007). Of the three editors, two were westerners. Christopher Bolton and Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr. were professors at United States colleges (Williams College and DePauw University, respectively) and the third, Takayuki Tastsumi, was a professor of American Literature at Keio University of Tokyo. Theirs is a unique perspective of how the cultures of science fiction and *anime* interact.

Also in 2007, librarian Robin E. Brenner added to the field with *Understanding Anime and Manga*. Unlike previous works, Brenner's is specifically written with the

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<sup>3</sup>*Otaku* literally means, “your house” in Japanese.

purpose of helping librarians understand the highly in-demand patron requests for *anime* and *manga* in libraries across the United States. As academia goes, this was more of a layman's guide to the subject, and Brenner addressed key points for librarians, as well as parents. It gave a brief summary of history of *anime* and *manga*, defined important terms, discussed the difference between Eastern and Western imagery, and gave programming suggestions. The intended audience of this work, those outside of the fandom, gave this book its important place. It is not only the fans that are important, but also those who wish to learn enough to serve and engage the fans in some way.

In 2008, Nancy Frey and Douglas Fisher included *anime* in *Teaching Visual Literacy: Using Comic Books, Graphic Novels, Anime, Cartoons and More to Develop Comprehension and Thinking Skills*. Frey and Fisher, professors of literacy at the University of San Diego, found that visuals are a strong motivator for people who have trouble reading. While this work did not lend anything to the study of the field of *anime* and *manga*, it did show the uses and other importance of the media.

The fan magazine *Anime Insider* (2001-2009) even weighed in on the spiritual side of *anime*, with a November 2009 feature article called: "The Monster Maker: Master of Yokai *Manga* Shigeru Mizuki." This article discusses the importance of the spiritual world and how it is disappearing."<sup>4</sup>

*Manga Impact: The World of Japanese Animation* was released in 2010 and although the title of the book implies it is about *manga*—which it is not—the subtitle told the reader what the book was actually about. The alphabetical encyclopedic entries about authors, characters, composers, directors, films, and television shows make up for the

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<sup>4</sup>*Yokai* (妖怪) can mean monster, spirit, or ghost.

earlier confusion caused by the title. At the end of the book, thirteen essays added to the discussion, along with a glossary of common terms.

The final word on *anime* and *manga* should belong to the two collections of 2010: *Anime and Philosophy: Wide Eyed Wonder* and *Manga and Philosophy: Fullmetal Metaphysician*. Up to that point, the discussion had been of the historical and artistic function and benefits of *anime* and *manga*, but with these works, editor Josef Steiff motivated fans to think about the deeper meaning of *anime* and *manga* in their wider worldview. *Anime and Philosophy* brought together philosophers and fans to discuss shows like *Astro Boy* (1952-1968), *Dragon Ball Z* (1989-1996) and *Ghost in the Shell* (1995) in order to wrestle with the concepts of the soul, morality, justice, and the meaning of life. *Manga and Philosophy* focused on different shows such as *Death Note* (2006-2007), *Gunslinger Girl* (2008), and *Space Battleship Yamato* (1974-75) to examine and debate the concepts of demons, sexualization of little girls, murder, and ethics.<sup>5</sup>

## Media Studies

There has been no logical leap from *Anime and Philosophy* to *anime* in religion. Instead, the study of movies and religion occasionally makes note of the contributions of Japan to its community. In Timothy Beals' 2011 work, *The Rise and Fall of the Bible: The Unexpected History of an Accidental Book*, Beal discussed the relative worth of *The Manga Bible* (2008) alongside other modern illustrated reinterpretations.

Chapter fifteen of *God in the Movies* (2003), “European Novel, American Movie, Japanimation: The Evolution of Storytelling God in the Movies,” discussed the

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<sup>5</sup>Wherever possible, the English titles of all *anime/manga* will be used for the purpose of clarity to a Western audience.

contribution of computer generated effects and animation to the evolution of storytelling. While such effects were impossible in the early days of filmmaking, they were possible in animation. The chapter reflects on the role of *Astro Boy* (1952-1968), *Robotech* (1985), *Akira* (1988), *Ghost in the Shell* (1995), and *Princess Mononoke* (1997).

*Princess Mononoke*, by creator/director Hayao Miyazaki, was part of a collection (Studio Ghibli) of movies brought to the United States and distributed by The Walt Disney Company. As such, it was one of the few movies that had a release in the United States by a company of such distinction (in contrast to the majority of works that are released by niche companies, such as FUNimation and the now out of business ADV). *God in the Movies* reflected on the fact that *anime* such as *Princess Mononoke* is not intended for children and includes adult themes. The book compared it to its contemporary, *Toy Story 2* (1999).

2004's *Finding God in the Movies: 33 Films of Reel Faith* also touched upon an *anime* movie. One of the thirty-three films was the 2003 Academy Award winner for Best Animated Feature: *Spirited Away* (2001)[Japan release, US 2003], by director/creator Hayao Miyazaki. *Finding God in the Movies* summarized the story and gave theological reflections on the characters and plot of this movie, based on traditional Japanese deities, religion, and folklore. At the end of every chapter, the reader was given a set of scriptures, discussion questions, clip conversations, and bonus material. In the bonus material relating to *Spirited Away*, Miyazaki was compared to a biblical writer: "Perhaps Miyazaki is a modern-day Qoheleth (the writer of Ecclesiastes) pointing to the fact that all of life—the problematic as well as the playful—is a gift from the Creator."<sup>6</sup> The author also

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<sup>6</sup>Catherine M. Barsotti and Robert K. Johnston, *Finding God in the Movies: 33 Films of Reel Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 81.

pointed out the other works of Miyazaki that could be studied for their theological content: *Laputa: Castle in the Sky* (1986), *My Neighbor Totoro* (1988), *Kiki's Delivery Service* (1989), and the aforementioned *Princess Mononoke* (1997).

In 2008's *Into the Dark: Seeing the Sacred in the Top Films of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Craig Detweiler devoted half of a chapter to animation. He believed that all animation, not just *anime*, was humanity's ultimate attempt to create life in an attempt to be like the Creator.<sup>7</sup> Detweiler compared God to the ultimate animator. Since humans could not create *ex nihilo*, they could create the illusion of life in animation. However, in an *Anime Insider* interview, Shigeru Mizuki refuted that claim. When asked: "Did your experiences in World War II have any effect on your work?" He answers: "I haven't been influenced by it. War is only 'death' and 'fear.' There was no creation, only destruction. However, I have told my experiences with the fear of war to the next generations through my non-fiction manga."<sup>8</sup>

*Discovering World Religions at 24 Frames Per Second* by Julien R. Fielding (2008) included *anime* in its discussion of the Asian religion of Shinto (神道). The first film discussed was *My Neighbor Totoro* (1998) and how many of the Shinto aspects were completely lost on a Western world. The story is one marketed toward children, and featured them and their interaction with ancient Shinto *Kami* (神) or gods. The story focuses on two sisters' fears relating to their mother's illness and their joys in meeting Totoro, the cat bus, and the forest.

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<sup>7</sup>Craig Detweiler, *Into the Dark: the Sacred in the Top Films of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008), 234-235.

<sup>8</sup>Carolyn Fowler and Mie Ikeda, "Q&A Shigeru Mizuki: On location in His Studio, the Manga Creator Delves Into the Supernatural," *Anime Insider* 62 (November 2008): 41.

The next section of the book dealt with an *anime* television series, *Kamichu!* (2005)<sup>9</sup>. *Kamichu!* was the story of a middle school girl who unsuccessfully replaced the local shrine *Kami*. The series immersed the audience in the ways of Shinto, from Kami to the ceremonial aspects and customs in a “slice of life” comic fashion.

Subsequent films discussed are *Princess Mononoke* and *Spirited Away*, this time for their original religious connotations, Shinto and Confucianism respectively. After discussing two live-action movies, the author returned with *Pom Poko* (1994). *Pom Poko*'s plot revolved around the conflict between civilization and nature. This movie wove Shinto into the narrative:

The main characters are *tanuki* (狸 or たぬき) that were previously worshiped by the inhabitants of a village that was being demolished for progress.<sup>10</sup> The *tanuki* attempted to win back their worshipers, but ultimately failed and they, as the *kitsune* (狐) before them, began to blend into human society and the wonder of the forest spirits were lost to the people.<sup>11</sup> *Faith and Film: Theological Themes at the Cinema* (2000), by Bryan P. Stone, also focused a chapter on the Western-popular *Spirited Away*.

Other books that did not touch on *anime*, but do treat the study of media for the use of spiritual reflection are published in abundance. Mark I. Pinsky, a reporter for the *Orlando Sentinel*, has a series of media-related books that use people's fascination with current or popular media to take the conversation about faith and pop-culture to the next

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<sup>9</sup>The English title, *The Goddess is a Middle School Student*, is not as well known or as widely used, so in this instance, the Japanese title makes it more accessible.

<sup>10</sup>Translated into English *tanuki* means Japanese raccoon dogs.

<sup>11</sup>Translated into English, *kitsune*, means fox spirits.

level. His books, *The Gospel According to the Simpsons* (2002), and its revision, *The Gospel According to the Simpsons, Bigger and Possibly Even Better* (2007), along with *The Gospel According to Disney: Faith, Trust, and Pixie Dust* (2004) have spawned a wealth of literature that does the same with other pop-phenomenon, including: *The Gospel According to Hollywood* by Greg Garrett (2007); *The Gospel According to Science Fiction: From the Twilight Zone to the Final Frontier* by Gabriel McKee (2007); *The Gospel According to Harry Potter: Spirituality in the Stories of the World's Most Famous Seeker* by Connie Neal (2002); *The Gospel According to the Beatles* by Steven Turner (2006).

### Youth Ministry

Jin Kyu Park wrote the first serious article on the spirituality of *anime* fans in *Culture and Religion* in 2005, “‘Creating My Own Spiritual Bubble’: Case of Cultural Consumption by Spiritual Seeker *Anime* Fans.” His goal was to explain why young Americans who are spiritual seekers become *otaku*. He argued that the liberal use of religion and religious symbolism made this easy for *anime* fans to understand their faith and create (syncretise) their own systems of belief. As with other Millennials, *otaku* tended to “take portions of belief from various faiths and nonfaiths and blend them into a unique spiritual system.”<sup>12</sup>

*Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (2005), by Smith and Lundquist, examined what it was like to be a teenager. They explored what kind of faith these teenagers had, what practices they made their own, and how they

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<sup>12</sup>Thom S. Rainer and Jess Rainer, *The Millennials: Connecting to America’s Largest Generation* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2011), 229.

foresaw their spiritual life in the coming years. The study was followed four years later with, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (2009) by Smith and Snell, who went back to the same teenagers and asked them about their spiritual life as they approached adulthood.

In the 2007 book, *They Like Jesus But Not the Church: Insights From Emerging Generations*, Pastor Dan Kimball recounted his interviews with young people and their reasons for leaving the church in which they were raised, or never joining a church in the first place. Part One of the book dealt with why the current generation has changed. Part Two of the book listed the six things young people think about the church: 1. Organized religion is too political; 2. Church is judgmental and negative; 3. Church is dominated by males and oppresses females; 4. Church is homophobic; 5. Church claims they are right and everyone else is wrong; 6. Church is filled with fundamental literalists.<sup>13</sup> After detailing each argument, Kimball then proposed in part three, the ways that churches could respond.

The Barna Group conducted a study that led to the publication of Kinnaman and Lyons' *Unchristian: What A New Generation Thinks About Christianity...and Why it Matters* (2007). This study shared much in common with Kimball's findings. The unchurched found churches hypocritical, insensitive, and judgmental. In comparison to Kimball, though, *Unchristian* gave clear numbers and percentages to make the argument very vivid.

Missiologist Ed Stetzer, along with Richie Stanley and Jason Hayes, worked with the information, that the unchurched generation has negative impressions about

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<sup>13</sup>Dan Kimball, *They Like Jesus but Not the Church: Insights From Emerging Generations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 73, 96, 115, 136, 163, and 187.

Christianity, and moved to the next logical steps in *Lost and Found: The Young Unchurched and The Churches That Reach Them* (2009). What kind of church would reach the unchurched? First they defined their terms, who were the unchurched? 1. always unchurched; 2. de-churched; 3. friendly and hostile unchurched.<sup>14</sup> Then they presented narratives of the unchurched to help illustrate the point. They included data that backed up Kimball and Kinniman's findings. *Lost and Found* concluded that mentoring was the most successful way to reach the young unchurched.<sup>15</sup>

Almost as if in response to what missiologists were finding about the preconceptions of the unchurched, Steve Wilkens and Don Thorsen put out *Everything You Know About Evangelicals is Wrong (Well, Almost Everything): An Insider's Look at the Myths & Realities* (2010). As an apologetic, the book took the most often recorded arguments raised against Christianity and refuted them.

In contrast, Trevin Wax, in the 2010 publication, *Holy Subversion: Allegiance to Christ in an Age of Rivals*, wanted to strip Christianity back to the basics and force a choice between Jesus and the Christian's "Caesars." Wax defined the "Caesars" in our lives as anything that distracted Christians from their devotion to Jesus Christ. His list included: self, success, money, leisure, sex, and power. While not speaking directly to the *anime* community in the chapter Leisure, he nonetheless addressed it when he said, "What we do with our free time shows who is king of our lives."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Ed Stetzer, Richie Stanley, and Jason Hayes, *Lost and Found: The Younger Unchurched and the Churches That Reach Them* (Nashville, TN: B&H Pub. Group, 2009), 9-14.

<sup>15</sup>Stetzer, *Lost and Found*, 130.

<sup>16</sup>Trevin Wax, *Holy Subversion: Allegiance to Christ in an Age of Rivals* (Wheaton, IL: Good News Publishers, 2010), 102.

Martin Thielen joined the debate in 2011 with *What's the Least I Can Believe and Still Be A Christian? A Guide to What Matters Most*. Thielen, a pastor, gave a list of ten things Christians needed to believe, as well as things they did not need to believe, in order to be a Christian. His lists presented contemporary readings of the Christian faith as hypocritical and judgmental, using examples of popular media interpretations of the faith, such as the *Left Behind* series.

Chap Clark, Professor of Youth, Family, and Culture at Fuller Theological Seminary talked about youth at the margins of society in *Hurt 2.0: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers* (2011). Clark focused on social networking and gaming, but could have easily added *anime* fans as well. What draws one to the *anime* community, often draws one also to social networking and gaming.

Diving into the fan mail sent to *Anime Insider*, the hurt, shame, and neediness of the fans becomes obvious: “I was wondering if you could help me with a little problem. I am a boy who likes romantic anime—I think it’s great. My problem is my friends don’t know and I really don’t want them to. So I was wondering if you could give me a few anime/manga titles that are filled with romance but still have enough action that I can tell my friends about it.”<sup>17</sup>

In an earlier volume of *Anime Insider*, another fan sent in this question: “I am a 21-year old girl who has recently become obsessed with the anime Naruto, and I was wondering if it’s wrong for an adult with a family to like such a ‘childish’ (according to

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<sup>17</sup>Name Withheld For Sweet Anonymity Somewhere in Oregon, “Isn’t It Romantic?” *Anime Insider* 62 (November 2008): 8.

my friends and family) thing?...I just wanted your opinion on whether or not this is socially acceptable.”<sup>18</sup>

The 2011 book, *The Millennials: Connecting to America’s Largest Generation* was written by a father and son team. The father, Thom Rainer was a Boomer (born in the 1950s) and his son Jess, was a Millennial (born between 1980-2000). They based their research on 1200 interviews with Millennials to find out what the largest generation - outnumbering even the Boomers - thought about family, spirituality and careers. Rainer and Rainer have found that “A Millennial is less likely to care about religious or spiritual matters than his or her predecessor generations.”<sup>19</sup> By blending beliefs of Shinto, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity, *anime* has already tackled this growing and complex system of spirituality.

David Kinnaman followed up *Unchristian* with 2011’s *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving the Church...and Rethinking Faith*. In his research, he discovered several young people are leaving the church and pointing fingers accusing the church of losing them, rather than simply slipping away from lack of interest. They found the preaching and pastoral care judgmental, and could not reconcile that message with their understanding of Jesus: “I hung in for a long while, thinking that fighting from the inside was the way to go, but I ultimately realized that it was damaging my relationship with God and my relationship with myself and I felt no choice but to leave.”<sup>20</sup>

In the current trends of literature, the fact that no one had made a careful study of the effects and impact of *anime* and *manga* on spirituality is not surprising. The hole

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<sup>18</sup>Katrina Madison, “Freak Out,” *Anime Insider* 57 (June 2008): 9.

<sup>19</sup>Rainer, *The Millennials*, 229.

<sup>20</sup>Rainer, *The Millennials*, 10.

comes not so much in the facts but in the asynchronism of two disparate ways of thinking. Understanding *anime* and *manga* and how fandom affects spiritual beliefs was uncharted territory ready for serious scholastic consideration.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

#### **Biblical Foundations**

##### *New Testament*

Jennifer was turned away from her church. Matthew was murdered. Dylan was misunderstood by his parents. Clark was run out of town. Jonathan was mocked by strangers. Anthony was abused by friends. Jessie was raped by a date. Stacy was abandoned by her relatives. Abbey was convicted for a crime she did not commit. Lauren was spat upon. J.J. was beaten by neighbors. Ann was rejected by her father. And through it all, Jesus Christ was there with them, soaking in the pain and rejection, held captive with them, ashamed with them, but not *of* them.<sup>1</sup> He had their affliction heaped upon him, experiencing their pain as his own.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.<sup>2</sup>

Many people interpret this passage to mean that God causes pain so that the afflicted can in turn comfort those who are also in pain, but that is not the case. Instead the Bible teaches we should “know that in all things God works for the good of those

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<sup>1</sup>All of the above mentioned people are real and their stories are true

<sup>2</sup>2nd Corinthians 1:3-7 New International Version (NIV). Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are taken from the New International Version.

who love him.” (Romans 8:28) To not use the pain that is a natural part of our life would be wasteful: “Specific pain enables us to comfort specifically.”<sup>3</sup> Hope tells us that if God also shares in our suffering, He also shares in our comfort.

In these five short verses, “The word ‘comfort’ occurs no less than ten times in its noun [Strong’s number 3870] and verb [Strong’s number 3874] forms in this brief paragraph – essentially, one-third of all thirty-one occurrences in the New Testament. Paul says the most about suffering, and more about comfort, than any other writer in the Bible. And it is here he says the most about it.”<sup>4</sup> The repetition of the word comfort becomes a rhythm, like a song.

According to *The New Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, the words used and translated as *Comfort* in the NIV are *parakalēō* 3870 and *paraklēsis* 3874.<sup>5</sup> None of the translation is in any kind of dispute. Paul uses the word often in his letter. What is interesting is that *Paraklēsis* shares the same root with *Paraklētōs*, 3875, which Jesus uses as a title for the Holy Spirit.

But what does Paul say to victims? How does a man who lived over two thousand years ago speak to the afflicted today? Paul was a well-respected Pharisee who persecuted the early church and its followers. How many teenagers feel they must keep their good reputation by putting down others? Is there a bond? Can the reader empathize? Bullying, a constant problem throughout the ages, has come to the forefront of public and media attention with the recent suicides by bullied LGBTQ teenagers and the response

<sup>3</sup>Charles R. Swindoll, *Paul: A Man of Grace and Grit* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2002), 94.

<sup>4</sup>Kent R. Hughes, *2 Corinthians: Power in Weakness* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2006), 22.

<sup>5</sup>James Strong, *The New Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990), 67, 212.

from the *It Gets Better Project*. While the project is aimed specifically at the LGBTQ teen community, it speaks to anyone who is harassed or bullied by offering comfort from others who have known and survived the same pain.

Syndicated columnist and author, Dan Savage began the movement in 2010 on YouTube with a single video where he and his partner, Terry Miller, hoped to inspire LGBTQ teenagers: “The *It Gets Better Project* was created to show young LGBTQ people the level of happiness, potential, and positivity their lives will reach – if they can just get through their teen years. The *It Gets Better Project* wants to remind teenagers in the LGBTQ community that they are not alone—and it WILL get better.”<sup>6</sup> Savage and Miller are working towards comfort, expressing their own, and giving a venue for others to express and receive comfort. What started as a single man’s attempt to provide comfort to an entire community, using his pain and his passion, has turned into an internet fellowship. To date, over 30,000 individuals have added their own voices to Savage’s, including celebrities, politicians, athletes, organizations, and activists, by uploading their own videos. According to the website of the *It Gets Better Project*, all those videos have been viewed more than 40 million times. Pain speaks to pain.<sup>7</sup>

At his conversion, Paul stopped his persecution and took up the cause. He was on fire and preached a mighty word, yet people still knew and remembered his reputation from his early days. A modern teenage mother found Christ, yet is still remembered as the promiscuous young girl who attended all the parties. Paul understood the pain of people choosing only to remember the past; he gives comfort to those like him.

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<sup>6</sup>“About Us,” It Gets Better Project. <http://www.itgetsbetter.org/pages/about-it-gets-better-project/> (accessed March 20, 2012).

<sup>7</sup>“About Us.”

Paul came into conflict with the Apostles and other believers because he heard and interpreted the Word of God differently. Today, a church member accused a pastor of being a *thief*, saying he did not earn his pay when he did not visit another member when she was in the hospital. The church member and the pastor interpreted the Word differently, through different lenses. Paul's words were meant as comfort to both.

Paul was imprisoned for his beliefs. The Occupy Wall Street Movement was pepper-sprayed and arrested during a non-violent protest. Paul seeks to comfort, especially where he found no comfort.

The outcast has been told that there is no mercy for them, that they have denied grace, have spat in God's face, have turned a deaf ear, and have fallen more times than can be counted. Charles Wesley's hymn *Depth of Mercy* speaks to today as well. "Can there be mercy still reserved for me?...I have long withheld his grace, long provoked him to his face, would not hearken to his calls, grieved him by a thousand falls."<sup>8</sup> Paul was acquainted with all of it, and, if he had not perpetrated the crimes himself, he witnessed them a thousand times. Yet, Paul still gives thanks that the people of Corinth are continuing to try their best, even through struggles and conflicts.

One of Paul's greatest conflicts came from the Jewish converts to Christianity who believed that, in order to be saved, one must obey the restrictions of Judaism as well as accept Christ as savior. These people were known as Judaizers. Paul felt that imposing Jewish tradition on the Gentiles (non-Jewish) would cause them to stumble in a rigid system that was not necessary for their salvation. Even though Paul himself was a Jew, he

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<sup>8</sup>*The United Methodist Hymnal: Book of United Methodist Worship* (Nashville, TN: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1989), 355.

understood that Jesus' sacrifice on the cross was for the whole world, not just the Chosen People.

As a literary device, Paul uses a modified synagogue blessing as his opening letter—"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort..."<sup>9</sup> In his way, he is acknowledging both the origins of the Christian faith and the Judaizing movement. Paul uses the same technique in Romans and Ephesians, and it was also used by the author of 1<sup>st</sup> Peter.<sup>10</sup>

It would have been a commonly understood way of establishing Christ as the inheritor of Israel's patriarchs, as well as the Christian as the inheritor of the Jewish people. This leads straight to Christ as the source of the Father's comfort. Paul was a man who understood pain and suffering—he was not only the victim of such things, but he was also the perpetrator.

As a Pharisee, he hunted down, tortured, and executed Christians. As a Christian he was imprisoned, beaten, lashed, and stoned. He had brotherly relationships torn apart, he was accused by the Apostles, and he was rejected by those he came to teach. Paul used those pains to frame his relationships with others in his prayers, and certainly in his words of comfort.

After Paul's experience on the road to Damascus, Jesus said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."<sup>11</sup> In order for his mission to be a blessing to those who knew not (the Gentiles) and those who

<sup>9</sup>2nd Corinthians 1:3.

<sup>10</sup>Hughes, *2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians: Power in Weakness*, 22-23.

<sup>11</sup>Acts 9:15-16.

knew (the people of Israel), Paul had to be physically blinded first, so his eyes could truly be opened. There are many people who would argue you cannot be a true Christian without first knowing suffering, but that is not what Paul is saying to the Corinthians. He states that each person's unique suffering leads to God's unique comfort, out of which a person becomes a champion for comfort:

*Affliction is essential.* What we conclude here is that affliction was key to Paul's effectiveness in ministry, and affliction is key to effective ministry today. How countercultural this is. It even runs counter to so much 'Christian' thinking that regards affliction as evidence of personal sin or deficient faith, and sleekness and ease palpable evidence of divine blessing.<sup>12</sup>

His argument is that Paul's affliction and the average Christian's afflictions, lend credibility and authenticity to witness and ministry. With teenagers, especially, it is not how much you know—book-wise—but how genuine you are that matters. *Do you genuinely care about me? Do you actually know what I am going through? Can I trust you? Am I all alone? Have I been abandoned?*

God has no orphans – only family. He provides for every child of His through the unlimited resources of heaven. No matter what the mistakes we have made, God cares for those who have chosen a love relationship with Him. Our world is full of hurting people who have no hope, but God made a provision for their every need through Jesus Christ. He then made Christ the Head of the churches He has established, in order that He might bring healing through His people who have come to know His saving grace. This is the strategy of God's redemptive plan to touch the world.<sup>13</sup>

Comfort does not end in the one who receives it, but overflows to those surrounding them. Taking it to a logical conclusion: Titus was God's comfort to Paul; Paul was God's comfort to the Corinthians; in Paul's letters to the Corinthians a pastor

<sup>12</sup>Hughes, *2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians: Power In Weakness*, 24.

<sup>13</sup>Henry T. Blackaby and Melvin D. Blackaby, *Experiencing God Together: God's Plan to Touch the World* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002), 4.

finds comfort and preaches a sermon to his/her congregation, and in turn, a member of the congregation hears the comforting message, internalizes and applies it to their own situation of grief and pain, and offers it to one of their friends or co-workers who has never been offered the comfort of God before. In Romans, Paul says he “rejoices in our suffering,” because it allowed him to share in the suffering of Christ’s death, the ultimate sharing of humanity’s suffering.

“If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer.”<sup>14</sup> Paul uses the word *we* to describe himself. *If I am distressed...if I am comforted...the same suffering I suffer*, and uses the word *you* corporately for the people of Corinth. His hope is not that he will be afflicted more, so much as it is that, if someone has to be afflicted, he would sacrifice himself on the behalf of others. Paul is neither a masochist nor a sadist.

In his work, *Wounds That Heal*, Stephen Seamands lays out four kinds of suffering: rejection, shame, being forsaken, and being held captive. He then outlines a plan for comfort that includes embracing the pain, forgiveness, love, and accepting scars. “We believe God’s solution to the problem of suffering and evil is not to eliminate it, nor to be insulated from it, but to participate in it and then, having participated in it, to transform it into his instrument for redeeming the world.”<sup>15</sup> “Rather than hindering God’s work, suffering and evil actually weave into God’s redemptive plan and pattern for the

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<sup>14</sup>2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 1:6.

<sup>15</sup>Stephen Seamands, *Wounds That Heal: Brining Our Hurts to the Cross* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2003), 169.

salvation of the world. God takes terrible tragedy and turns it into triumph; the grotesque becomes glorious, evil transmuted into good.”<sup>16</sup>

### *The Old Testament*

Jamie was a troubled child. She was in and out of jail and her bad behavior caused strife between her parents. The messy divorce that followed awoke a new awareness inside of her as well as dividing her family. She and her mother moved across the country and began living with her grandparents. She left her father, brother and friends behind. She began school in the middle of the year and found it difficult to make friends. She was made fun of because of her accent. She felt alienated and alone:

Why do you cry out over your wound, your pain that has no cure? Because of your great guilt and many sins I have done these things to you. “But all who devour you will be devoured; all your enemies will go into exile. Those who plunder you will be plundered; all who make spoil of you I will despoil. But I will restore you to health and heal your wounds,” declares the LORD, ‘because you are called an outcast, Zion for whom no one cares.’<sup>17</sup>

This text falls into the section of Jeremiah’s work called *The Book of Consolation*.

At that time, the Chosen People had suffered much; the Temple of Solomon had been destroyed, the Babylonians had invaded and taken the elite of the Israelites into captivity, and the common man had fled to Egypt. Jeremiah’s previous prophecies had fallen on deaf ears and he had lived to witness all this tragedy. In the *Book of Consolation*, “These words of blessing and joy will replace the past words of lament and mourning.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Seamands, *Wounds That Heal*, 169.

<sup>17</sup>Jeremiah 30:15-17.

<sup>18</sup>Gary E. Yates, “Jeremiah’s Message of Judgment and Hope for God’s Unfaithful Wife” *Bibliotheca Sacra* (January 1, 2010): 158.

It is hard, when talking about *outcast youth*, to acknowledge that the very one in need of restoration is also responsible for their outcast status. Not in an accusative way—not in an “it is your fault that you have been outcast”—but in a way that every human being is responsible for their own life and the relationships therein.

For example, Yuki is a young female-to-male transgendered youth who was raised in the Catholic Church. Because Yuki chose, at a young age, to reveal his orientation and identification, his priest denied him communion and expelled him and his family from the church. Was this a Godly behavior on the part of the priest? No. Did the priest attempt to do what he thought was correct in the situation? Probably, but humanity will never know if it was an attempt at doing the right thing, following a church policy, or if he had an ingrained hatred of something with which he would not, or could not, understand or empathize.

Expelled from a particular church, Yuki became the shepherd of his own soul, responsible for seeking out or denying a relationship with God. He chose to deny God, reject the church, and look for his spirituality in other places. It took years, the intervention of the researcher, and a loving United Methodist pastor to steer Yuki back into a restorative relationship. In the in-between time, Yuki was in exile and an outcast from the great cloud of witnesses. not only because the priest made it so, but because, being hurt and wounded, Yuki chose not to be in fellowship with people who could potentially judge and hurt him again. God, he felt, had allowed this suffering to occur and in a natural reaction to that feeling, decided to shun God.

But unbeknownst to Yuki, God was working and preparing people who would come into his path to reintroduce him to a loving and healing God. The book of Yuki’s

life ran parallel to the Book of Jeremiah, and to the book of every outcast believer.

Wounded and hurting, they seek to escape and flee from their tormentors. They are not sinless, any of them, from a multitude of small and unintentional sins, to monstrous and blatant sins. Intentionally or not, they also seek restoration. They want to be comforted.

In a huge and blatant sin, Israel turned away and did not heed the word of the Prophet Jeremiah. They reaped the consequences and the nation was sundered, exiled. Israel suffers, but God sends another prophecy to Jeremiah, one of restoration and vindication: “Despite Israel’s infidelity and lack of lasting love (“loyal love”) toward Yahweh, Yahweh remains faithful to His covenantal commitments and will act in the future on Israel’s behalf on the basis of these commitments.”<sup>19</sup>

The Book of Jeremiah is in an “apparent literary disarray” that has little chronological cohesion.<sup>20</sup> A book mainly composed of narratives and sermons, Jeremiah chronicles the historical reigns of Jehoiakim (605-697 BC) and Zedekiah (597-586) through the post-fall of Jerusalem. In the middle of those narratives, Chapters 30-31 (and to some extent 33), with their poetic oracles of restoration and healing, have very little in common with the rest of the book.

There may have been as many as four separate authors: “(A) poetic oracles in 1-25; (B) biographical narrative in 26-45; (C) prose sermons in 1-45; and (D) a book of consolation in 30-31.”<sup>21</sup> So who is this Jeremiah who wrote the Book of Consolation? In James L. Crenshaw’s paper, he acknowledges strong, yet contrasting, theories. He was

<sup>19</sup>Yates, “Jeremiah’s Message,” 17.

<sup>20</sup>Gary E. Yates, “New Exodus and No Exodus in Jeremiah 26-45: Promise and Warning to the Exiles in Babylon,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 57, no. 1 (January 1, 2006): 2.

<sup>21</sup>James L. Crenshaw, “A Living Tradition: The Book of Jeremiah in Current Research,” *Interpretations* (April 1983): 118.

either a survivor of the Northern Kingdom preaching hope, an Exilic redactor comparing the Exile and the Exodus, or: “The collapse of the Judean state confirmed the authenticity of Jeremiah’s message, demonstrating to one and all that he was indeed a true prophet. The Deuteronomists therefore chose to use him as a means of addressing their own people with an alternative to opt for or against the divine word.”<sup>22</sup>

Putting aside issues of authorship on the large scale and assuming even the author of Jeremiah 30-31 was a single author, he is still a contradictory oracle. In verse 30:15, he says that Israel has no right to complain, Israel caused its own pain. In verses 16-18, he says that Israel’s enemies will receive the same treatment that they have and that Israel will be healed. Why would God restore the health of Israel even though their sin has caused the sickness?

“In the end, it is asserted that God’s sovereign purpose reshapes and reorders Israel’s despairing present and Israel’s doubted but yearned-for future.”<sup>23</sup> There is actually hope in this statement, because it says that the one who is beyond restoration—the one that cannot restore itself—can still be restored by almighty and merciful God.

According to Walter Brueggeman, Jeremiah prepares the reader for further judgment, but does a complete turn and uses a verbal trick of pairing words: the devourer is devoured. The plunderer is plundered. The despoiler is despoiled. As in the earlier verses of Chapter 30, Jeremiah reveals that the strong are attacked while the weak are protected. God goes from being Israel’s tormentor to its protector.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Crenshaw, “A Living Tradition,” 122.

<sup>23</sup>Walter Brueggemann. *To Build, To Plant: Jeremiah 26-52* (Grand Rapids, MI: WM B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991), 51.

<sup>24</sup>Brueggemann, *To Build, To Plant*, 51.

What does it mean for Yuki to be an outcast? Or the people of Israel? According to *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, the word used נָדַח and translated as *Outcast* in the Jeremiah text is:

5080 נָדַח (nâdach) meaning “to *push off*; used in a great variety of applications, lit. and fig. (to expel, mislead, strike, inflict, etc.): – banish, bring, cast down (out), chase, compel, draw away, drive (away, out, quite), fetch a stroke, force, go away, outcast, thrust away (out), withdraw.”<sup>25</sup>

Interestingly enough, the number 5080 only appears in the singular form in the Book of Jeremiah. It appears as the plural, *Outcasts* in Jeremiah 49:36 and in three places in Isaiah (16:3, 16:4, and 27:13). As a plural, *Outcasts* is also the translation of 1760 הדָחָה or הדָחָך meaning “to *push down*:—chase, drive away (on), overthrow, outcast, sore, thrust, totter.”<sup>26</sup> It appears once in Psalm 147:2 and Isaiah 11:12, 56:8.

Why did Jeremiah use the meaning *to push off* rather than *to push down*? *Push off* is a less violent action. A parent pushes off a wayward child, it is a punishment meant for correction. The NIV translates the word as *exile* in Jeremiah 49:36. Isaiah’s use of the word in chapter 16 is translated as *fugitive* and in 27 as *exile*. Whether to refer to a fugitive or exile from the faith: is the action on the part of the exiled fugitive or on the exiler.

In the NIV, *push down* is translated in Psalm 147:2, and Isaiah 11:12, 56:8 as *exiles*. *Push down* is used when God’s Exiles are talked about, while *push off* is used to describe people other than God’s chosen, such as Elam in Jeremiah 49:36 and Moab in Isaiah 16:3, 4. It is therefore reasonable to look at Jeremiah 30:17 and wonder why this one and only time, *push off* is used to describe the chosen people. Has God given up on

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<sup>25</sup>Strong, *The New Strong's*, 91.

<sup>26</sup>Strong, *The New Strong's*, 30.

the chosen? No. In complete contrast, God is showing how far the people had fallen away from God's favor and how much greater, then, is God's grace and mercy.

### Theological Foundations



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### *Woundedness*

At the 2012 General Conference of the United Methodist Church in Tampa, Florida, Westboro Baptist Church spread its message at a sidewalk protest, in front of the Love Your Neighbor Tabernacle. Their signs read: “YOUR PASTOR IS A WHORE,” “SOLDIERS DIE 4 FAGS,” “GOD H8S FALSE PROPHETS,” and “METHODIST FAG CHURCH.”

Westboro Baptist Church’s mission is to “preach against all forms of sin (e.g., fornication, adultery, [including divorce and remarriage], sodomy), and insist of the

sovereignty of God and the doctrines of grace be taught and expounded publicly to all men.”<sup>1</sup>

Members of the United Methodist Church stood between those signs and the Tampa traffic, singing and praying while the protestors called them abominations. A young man stood across the street from the protestors with a sign of his own: “GOD LOVES ALL.”

German Lutheran theologian Eberhard Jungel (1934 – present) teaches that “The aim of purpose of theological reflection is to accept responsibility for human speech about God, since theological reflection occurs mainly in the proclamations of the Christian church...”<sup>2</sup> How do humans accept responsibility for the voice of the Church Universal? Protests like this one leave an impression on the unchurched, declaring that Christianity is judgmental and hypocritical. Jungel, a liberation theologian says, “Theology is free because it has to do with liberating substances—the saving truth of God becoming human. The truth is liberating because it originates from the liberating God.”<sup>3</sup>

Theologians down through time can speak directly to all one-sided arguments and, while nothing they say will change a group’s theology, the exercise is important, because it is in the defending of one’s own position that one’s theology becomes stronger.

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<sup>1</sup>Westboro Baptist Church, "About Us." *GodHatesFags*. <http://www.godhatesfags.com/wbcinfo/aboutwbc.html> (accessed May 22, 2012).

<sup>2</sup>Donald W. Musser and Joseph L. Price, *A New Handbook of Christian Theologians* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1992), 246.

<sup>3</sup>Musser, *A New Handbook*, 246.

In the FAQ section of their website, Westboro Baptist Church details why they preach hate: “Because the Bible preaches hate. For every one verse about God's mercy, love, compassion, etc., there are two verses about His vengeance, hatred, wrath, etc...”<sup>4</sup>

In Selderhuis' biography of John Calvin, he talks about how Calvin's conscience was anxious to please God: “One's conscience is tormented by an awareness of being a sinner and having to appear before a righteous and wrathful god, and one's conscience finds heavenly rest when it knows forgiveness and renewal.”<sup>5</sup> Instead of holding tight to the desires to be separate and alien or the *other*, Calvin sought to master his physical desires, “...but that the Spirit of God reign in us, then we give evidence of our adoption, that we walk in fear of God, holding to him as our Father and giving God the honor that is due him. That is the essence of what it means to be Christian.”<sup>6</sup>

When a church preaches against the ultimate character of Christ, they are providing proof that what the unchurched or dechurched have come to believe about the church is true: the Church is hypocritical, too focused on getting converts, anti-homosexual, sheltered, too political, and judgmental.<sup>7</sup>

Japanese theologian Kosuke Koyama (1929-pesent), a professor of Ecumenics and World Christianity at Union Theological Seminary, rejects the academics of theology

<sup>4</sup>Westboro Baptist, “FAQ.” [http://www.godhatesfags.com/faq.html#God's\\_hate](http://www.godhatesfags.com/faq.html#God's_hate) (accessed May 22, 2012).

<sup>5</sup>Herman J. Selderhuis, *John Calvin: A Pilgrim's Life* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 20.

<sup>6</sup>Selderhuis, *John Calvin*, 21.

<sup>7</sup>David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *Unchristian: What A New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity...and Why it Matters* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2007), 29-30.

in favor of contextual Theology.<sup>8</sup> Theology cannot be taken out of context, and Phelps (Westboro) is an old, white man, who finds himself in a context where his word is held in equal with God's word. The seasoning of the community in which Phelps preaches, colors not only the culture of his churches, but the communities in which they give witness.

That is not to say that Koyama would agree with Phelps, but that he understands that Phelps is as much a product of his own theology as anyone else. In fact, Koyama would say the opposite: "Christians should not call other religions inferior [nor other denominations] and Christianity superior, not only because there is no objective measure to rank different religions, but also because the 'finality' of Christ is that someone who has been spat upon, mocked, and crucified. It is not triumphant but 'crucified finality'."<sup>9</sup>

Pastors like Phelps preach as if, in shaming people, he will turn people from their sin and they will repent. However, Jesus said in Luke 6:36-38 "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

According to Stephen Seamands' *Wounds That Heal*, there are three types of shame: Positive, Negative, and Toxic. Positive Shame is a concept that Calvin embraced: "For Calvin, conversion meant freedom, a liberation from torments of the conscience, from that feeling that whatever he did was sinful and wrong. Calvin experienced freedom

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<sup>8</sup>Musser, *A New Handbook*, 24.

<sup>9</sup>Musser, *A New Handbook*, 26.

from all of this and found peace in conscience. According to him, “there is no greater good one can inherit on this earth.”<sup>10</sup>

In his book, *Healing the Shame That Binds You*, John Bradshaw writes:

It is necessary to have the feeling of shame if one is to be truly human...Shame tells us our limits. Shame keeps us in our human boundaries, letting us know that we can and will make mistakes, and that we need help. Our shame tells us that we are not God. Healthy shame is the psychological foundation of humility. It is the source of spirituality.<sup>11</sup>

In Bradshaw’s estimation, therefore, shame can be a very useful tool to reaching a higher spiritual path and allowing a closer walk with God. John Wesley would seem to agree: “His prime concern was to link sin to a sense of responsibility. Because he reasoned that we can be responsible only for that which we are conscious, he limited sin to those things we consciously do that we know are against the will of God.”<sup>12</sup>

But there is still yet another kind of shame: “This destructive kind of shame, especially the shame rooted in our painful hurts and our sinful, unhealthy reactions to those hurts, distorts and destroys our God-given glory, rather than reflecting it.”<sup>13</sup> One thing that theologians like Calvin, Wesley, and Luther would agree upon is that everyone sins.

According to Bradshaw, churches practicing toxic shame drive away people who could be saved by the Truth of the Gospel. People are either turned off by the repugnant lies told in the name of Christ or they have such toxic shame of their own, and the

<sup>10</sup>Selderhuis, *John Calvin*, 21.

<sup>11</sup>John Bradshaw, *Healing the Shame That Binds You* (Deerfield Beach, Florida: Heath Communications, 1988), vii.

<sup>12</sup>Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 86.

<sup>13</sup>Seamands, *Wounds That Heal*, 43.

reflected vitriol makes them feel that the lies told about them are true: “Toxic shame, the shame that binds you, is experienced as the all-pervasive sense that I am flawed and defective as a human being. Toxic shame is no longer an emotion that signals our limits, it is a state of being, a core identity. Toxic shame gives you a sense of worthlessness, a sense of failing and falling short as a human being.”<sup>14</sup>

Biblical shame, or a healthy understanding that a person is naked before God with sins revealed, serves in harsh contrast to the bullying that comes from some denominations in the current age: “It is crippling, because it contains not just the derisive accusation that one is a wimp, a bully, a runt, or a fag but the further implications that one is at the core a deformed being, fundamentally unlovable and unworthy of membership in the human community.”<sup>15</sup> In the end, all that is added to the whole of Christianity by congregations preaching hate is a woundedness that harms the entire body. They are more concerned with the sin of humanity than with the Grace of God.

### *Sin*

John Wesley brought new light to the idea of sin and challenged Calvin’s Predestination—the calling or adopting of the elect, saving some from the beginning of the world, while excluding others—understanding that sin was another opportunity to show God’s love and mercy in contrast to the thoughts and works of humanity. In contrast, Luther believed justification allowed that one could continually sin because God would continually forgive, while Calvin said that sin was a sign that a soul was not elect. The elect are known by their sinless lives and therefore why should anyone who has sinned

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<sup>14</sup>Bradshaw, *Healing Shame*, 10.

<sup>15</sup>Robert Karen, "Shame," *The Atlantic Monthly* (February 1992): 42-43.

bother to try and sin no more? The very fact of their sin, shows them as non-elect. There is no reason to improve, no reason to seek God. Wesley believed that anyone who promotes those ideas makes God out to be a deceiver, the Father of Lies:

You cannot deny that he says, ‘Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden.’ If then you say he calls those that cannot come, those whom he knows to be unable to come, those whom he can make able to come but will not, how is it possible to describe greater insincerity? You represent him as mocking his helpless creature by offering what he never intends to give...saying one thing and meaning another...pretending to love which he had not.”<sup>16</sup>

But what exactly is sin? The Greeks word *hamartia* is what we understand as sin today: “Hamartia offers the familiar example of missing the bull’s-eye: you aim the arrow at the center of the target, but your arrow lands somewhere beyond its goal. Moral wrong-doing presupposes righteousness, as well as knowledge of the bull’s-eye.”<sup>17</sup>

Saint Augustine’s seminal work on sin confirms this notion of understanding both righteousness and the target. Saint Augustine does not believe in the personal concept of individuality as we see it in modern times, in fact he would probably consider it a blasphemy: “We all were in that one man, since we all were that one man who fell into sin.”<sup>18</sup>

Martin Luther (1483-1546) lived in the repercussions of the Inquisition. His most important doctrine said “...that for all believers there is no sin at all (since God sees the righteousness of Christ, to whom all are joined), and that in the believer everything is sin

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<sup>16</sup>Runyon, *The New Creation*, 39.

<sup>17</sup>John Portmann, *A History of Sin: Its Evolution to Today and Beyond* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007), xiv.

<sup>18</sup>Gerald R. McDermott, *The Great Theologians: A Brief Guide* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 56.

(sinful nature is still very much with in this life). There are both heaven and hell in each person at the same time."<sup>19</sup>

John Taylor wrote *The Scriptural Doctrine of Original Sin*, a Deist work that argued, "...that human sin is basically the result of bad habits encouraged by environmental influences...But sin is not inbred or inherent in human nature."<sup>20</sup> John Wesley formed his understanding of Original Sin in response to Taylor's work. Wesley said that "The Lord is loving unto every man, and his mercy is over all his works...He is the propitiation, not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world."<sup>21</sup>

### *Salvation*

It is a reasonable duty of all Christians to call sin into the light, but how we do so informs an unbelieving world about the God we serve. How are we saved from our sin? Martin Brecht said, "For Luther, man remains bound to humility, and this means at the same time, despite believing that his sins will not be held against him, that he still cannot be certain of his salvation."<sup>22</sup>

Sinners can be saved, if, as Wesley understands it, there is a grace much more available than commonly understood. Wesley's concept of Preventing or Prevenient Grace is the concept that human-kind can do nothing good, not even recognize and accept

<sup>19</sup>McDermott, *The Great Theologians*, 87

<sup>20</sup>Runyon, *The New Creation*, 19.

<sup>21</sup>Runyon, *The New Creation*, 39.

<sup>22</sup>Sven Grosse, "Salvation and the Certitude of Faith: Luther on Assurance" *Pro Ecclesia* 20, no. 1 (December 1, 2011): 67.

God, apart from God's gift of grace. The good news is that this gift is available to all people from the moment God conceives them.<sup>23</sup>

After Preventive Grace has worked upon the heart of the sinner, allowing them, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to hear and understand the words of the Bible, preachers, and the witness of their fellows, comes Justification: "Since all human beings are hopelessly immersed in sin, their salvation depends on God, and first and foremost it depends on God's accepting them despite their sin. That acceptance is forgiveness, and that forgiveness, or pardon, is justification."<sup>24</sup>

Many Christian theologies stop at Justification, but Wesley felt being a confessing Christian was important, but essentially not enough: "Appealing to Luther's doctrine that we are always both justified and sinful, many could recognize their continuing sinfulness without shame or apology. As long as they believed that God pardoned them, they thought, they could sin without compunction. In their view, salvation was God's business and not theirs. Their personal morality had nothing to do with it."<sup>25</sup> In their own ways, the end result of God's grace leads Luther to joy because of its freedom; to Calvin it signified obedience, but to Wesley, there was this notion of sanctification that meant love and service caused a new birth that happened simultaneously at the moment of Justification and continued for one's whole life:

...that great change which God works in the soul when he brings it into life: when he raises it from death of sin to the life of righteousness. It is the change wrought in the whole soul by the almighty Spirit of God when it is 'created anew in Christ Jesus,' when it is 'renewed after the image of God', 'in righteousness and true

<sup>23</sup>John B. Cobb Jr., *Grace & Responsibility: A Wesleyan Theology for Today* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 84.

<sup>24</sup>Cobb, *Grace & Responsibility*, 84.

<sup>25</sup>Cobb, *Grace & Responsibility*, 101.

holiness,’ when the love of the world is changed into the love of God, pride into humility, passion into meekness; hatred, envy, malice into a sincere, tender, disinterested love for all mankind.<sup>26</sup>

When Wesleyan theologian Andrew Dragos looked at the humanity in three parts in his article, “How Prevenient Grace Shapes Our Missional Presence,” he encountered a triune realization that there are three things that every human inherits: original sin, the *imago dei*, and Prevenient grace. “Prevenient grace teaches us that in spite of the fall, the *imago dei* has not been erased. Every person carries in them the grace inherent in being created by God as well as the benefits of the atonement.”<sup>27</sup>

### *Healing*

One pinned post on the popular Pinterest.com reads, “I’m a good enough person to forgive you, but not stupid enough to trust you.”<sup>28</sup> Searching Google for the same quote resulted in more than one million posts of people who are reposting the sentiment on other social media outlets. Forgiveness, it seems is one thing, but reconciliation and wholeness is another thing altogether. The Church’s response in the face of forgiveness and healing sets the tone for the large world:

In a world where brokenness and pain is an everyday reality, the Church can live missionally by being a healing presence in its community. The longing for wholeness and the hope for eternity are all yearnings placed there by God. When the world encounters a church characterized by love, then before its very eyes is modeled that life marked by those deep longings enabled by prevenient grace.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Cobb, *Grace & Responsibility*, 97.

<sup>27</sup>Andrew Dragos, "How Prevenient Grace Shapes Our Missional Presence," *Seedbed: Sowing For A Great Awakening*. May 8, 2012. <http://seedbed.com/feed/how-prevenient-grace-shapes-our-missional-presence> (accessed May 16, 2012).

<sup>28</sup>Pinterest, “Search Results,” <http://pinterest.com/pin/222646775298504572/> (accessed June 26, 2012).

<sup>29</sup>Dragos, “Prevenient Grace,” no pagination.

However, for Augustine, the reason to forgive was the concept of repentance. In *The Wounded Heart of God*, Dr. Andrew Sung Park says, “Repentance is a step towards reconciliation.”<sup>30</sup> In the Bible, Jesus teaches his disciples to pray, “Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.”<sup>31</sup> The mandate calls Christians to repent of their own wrong doings and be forgiven by God in order that they may forgive others.

Thomas Aquinas continued with Augustine’s concept of penance and broke it down into four parts, contrition, confession, satisfaction and absolution.<sup>32</sup> In order to be forgiven, one must be sorry for one’s deeds, confess them (for Aquinas this meant to a priest), make reparations for the deed, and then receive pardon (again from a priest). Luther made repentance a sacrament and Calvin rejected it, but to the Reformers, “...faith precedes repentance.”<sup>33</sup>

Repentance, however only gets one so far, as the “but not stupid enough to trust you,” statement implies. What needs to follow is reconciliation and healing. In the Asian concept of *Han*, healing transpires when the victim of sin is restored to wholeness. Park writes that, “Salvation is a relational event. It is a process of healing and freedom which transpires between sinners and their victims, and sinners and God.”<sup>34</sup>

From the Eastern-European perspective, there is Yale professor, Miroslav Volf: “A native of Croatia, he has forged a theology of forgiveness and non-violence in the face of

<sup>30</sup>Andrew Sung Park, *The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), 87.

<sup>31</sup>Luke 11:4.

<sup>32</sup>Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 88.

<sup>33</sup>Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 89.

<sup>34</sup>Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 103.

violence experienced in Croatia and Serbia in the 1990s.”<sup>35</sup> Out of his experience of genocide and healing, he merges Jesus’ earthly mission and our need for healing both as victim and victimizer:

Jesus did not come into the world in order to conquer evildoers through an act of violence, but to die for them in self-giving love and thereby reconcile them to God. The outstretched arms of the suffering body on the cross qualify the whole of Christ’s mission. He condemned the sin of humanity by taking it upon himself; and bearing it, he freed humanity from its power and restored their communion with God. Though suffering on the cross is not all Christ did, the cross represents the decisive criterion for how all his work is to be understood.<sup>36</sup>

If, as Volf says, violence (of both word and deed) is not the answer that Jesus taught, where do Christians begin the process of reconciliation? As Jesus admonished, his followers should start in prayer, “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor[a] and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”<sup>37</sup>

In this cultural conditioning, Park and Volf, witnesses and victims of sin, as well as sinners in their own right find that their desires run toward restoration and reconciliation in Jesus’ name. This is in contrast to the privileged church, in its cultural milieu of White, Heterosexual, Male Oppressor, which leads toward more violence in Jesus’ name. What might have started with one straight, white, male and his hatred of homosexuals and women, has perpetuated such hatred in his followers: “We imitate the desire of another, while persisting in the illusion that our desires originate in ourselves.

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<sup>35</sup>David Crumm, “Meet Miroslav Volf, whose ‘Allah’ is a Path to Peace.” *Read the Spirit* (February 16, 2010), <http://www.readthespirit.com/explore/2011/2/16/meet-miroslav-volf-whose-allah-is-a-path-to-peace.html?printFriendly=true> (accessed January 1, 2013).

<sup>36</sup>Miroslav Volf, *A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2011) 47-47.

<sup>37</sup>Matthew 5:43-45.

So we somehow manage to be wrapped up in ourselves and obsessed with other people at the same time..."<sup>38</sup>

What is the logical conclusion for Park, Volf, and Westboro Baptist? For Park, he is led to wholeness: "By treating the issue of sin alone, we are not able to grasp and cut off the vicious cycle of abuse, violence, exploitation, and oppression which plague the planet and its inhabitants."<sup>39</sup> There is a beautiful goal in his words: healing, peace, honor, freedom.

For Volf, remembering rightly is his main goal. To remember humankind's place in the world, and its effect on the world and then, after forgiveness and reconciliation, to not only say, "I'm a good enough person to forgive you," but then to forget the reason for the need of forgiveness to forge a stronger relationship and have trust restored:

In a sense, forgetting is given to us as the gift of a healed relationship. It's a gift of the new world, which God gives us. Then we can not remember. And then our experience is like a person who is sitting in a concert hall and listening to a wonderful piece of music. Even though just two hours ago she was experiencing hell at her job, she's taken up into that music. It's not that she tried to forget so that she could be in the music; it's that the music took her out of the remembrance of the past. God gives us the gift of a healed self, healed relationships, and a reconstituted world, and then we can not remember.<sup>40</sup>

And finally to Westboro Baptist, their goal is to make a scapegoat and be alone at the judgment with only people who agree with them basking in God's glory:

One person will point or strike at a one figure in the group, somebody marginal or exceptional in some way. The others will follow, and the aggression is aligned against that individual. What was a war of all against all is now a war of all against one. The marginal figure, or this may be a group, becomes a scapegoat, the one whom the aggression of the community is projected. When that individual

<sup>38</sup>Michael Kirwan, "Being Saved from Salvation: René Girard & the Victims of Religion," *Communio Viatorum* 52, no. 1 (January 1, 2010): 28.

<sup>39</sup>Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 178.

<sup>40</sup>Collin Hansen and Miroslav Volf, "Redeeming Bitterness: Miroslav Volf Tells How to Stop the 'Shield of Memory' from Turning into a Word," *Christianity Today* 51, no. 5 (May 2007): 51.

or group is either expelled or executed, the community as a whole experiences a sense of transcendent peace, and the whole action is felt to have been sanctioned from outside.<sup>41</sup>

### *Theological Conclusion*

René Girard believed that the human condition can only be truly understood when it is examined in the light of the Gospels: “It is in the teaching, life, death and above all the resurrection of Jesus that we are shown a different example of human living and a different kind of transcendence, or way of relating to the sacred.”<sup>42</sup>

When the Gospel is held up to the witness of humanity, humanity always loses. Whether the theologian is one of the Protestant Reformers, an Asian, an Eastern European, or even a privileged American, none can truly begin to understand, much less properly explain, the purpose of God’s word. The only thing all Christians can agree upon is that there is sin. They cannot even agree upon what that word means or how to deal with it, but they all acknowledge that there is something that separates humankind from its Creator.

The human tendency to separate everything based on likeness and differences has led to much division in the earth-bound Kingdom of God, and fostered an attitude where insiders and outsiders are left at stark odds with each other. This, however, is not the Gospel truth:

Jesus’ compassion knew no bounds and thus negated and transformed social structures based on insider/outsider mentality. His fellowship with and healing of lepers, demoniacs, women and tax collectors, Samaritans and religious leaders

<sup>41</sup>Kirwan, “Being Saved From Salvation,” 29.

<sup>42</sup>Kirwan, “Being Saved From Salvation,” 29.

alike created a new community of sinner-saints who stand on an equal plane before God and one another.<sup>43</sup>

Perhaps Girard is correct, “...all men are caught in a mechanism of lies and violence from which they cannot free themselves,” or maybe Anselm in his understanding that “...human kind must make satisfaction, but cannot.”<sup>44</sup> What matters, however, is that God has a plan to heal humanity’s sin and woundedness by Jesus’ salvation and healing.

### **Historical Foundations**

When secular agencies in control transform their rule to become a theocracy, they bring into the counter-culture of faith an already defined culture and assimilate the counter-culture in a way that theologically reflects the influence of secularism: slavery is good; blacks are inferior and therefore cannot sit in the same pews as whites; women are weak and therefore cannot preach; youth are inexperienced and therefore must not be included in the decision making process for their own futures; LGBTQ are perverts and therefore must be excluded from the fellowship.

Christianity began as a movement for people who were not part of the majority. They were considered outsiders and were marginalized. They were a fringe group to a persecuted minority, thrown to the wild beasts as a form of entertainment.

In Apostolic times, Stephen was stoned to death by the Sanhedrin. In 64 CE, Nero set Rome ablaze, blamed the Christians, and punished them with crucifixion and mass

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<sup>43</sup>Latini, “Engaging Our Imagination,” 263.

<sup>44</sup>Kirwan, “Being Saved From Salvation,” 38-39.

murder. Marcus Aurelius outlawed Christianity in 177 CE. Early Christians had only a small band of like-minded individuals circulating letters of comfort.

During his childhood, Athanasius (c. 296-298) and his community, the Coptic Christians, were persecuted by Diocletian in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. He survived and his faith was strengthened by the trial.<sup>45</sup> Athanasius went on to become a Bishop of the church who fought against heresy with a new paradigm: “The saints used spiritual weapons to ascend, such as making the sign of the cross and praying with groans.”<sup>46</sup>

Persecutions continued as a trend until Constantine (c. 272-337 CE) elevated Christianity to legal status in 313 CE. Christianity found its first major benefactor in the pseudo-Christian Constantine. Through the influence of Constantine’s mother, almost overnight, Christianity had been transformed from an illegal religion to the faith of the emperor himself – not merely tolerated, but actually promoted.<sup>47</sup>

Unfortunately, Christians learned well the lessons of their persecutors and used the same techniques to begin persecuting pagans, heretics, and sadly, other Christians: “The formative experience of martyrdom and persecution determined the ways in which later Christians would both use and experience violence under the Christian empire. Discourses of martyrdom and persecution formed the symbolic language through which Christians represented, justified, or denounced the use of violence.”<sup>48</sup>

As a religion or culture comes to prominence, it is not unexpected that that culture or religion wants to stay on top, and after Constantine and his successors began to

<sup>45</sup>McDermott, *The Great Theologians*, 31.

<sup>46</sup>McDermott, *The Great Theologians*, 34.

<sup>47</sup>Hill, *The History of Christian Thought*, 61.

<sup>48</sup>Michael Gaddis, *There Is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ: Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005), 70.

embrace Christianity, they also kept their historic ideals of conquering. It was not enough to defeat their enemies, but in the spirit of revenge and in the name of God, Christian kingdoms began to wage war on other cultures and religions.

Even after Constantine's conversion, Christians were not exempt from persecution. During Augustine's lifetime (354-430 CE), the Goths sacked Rome and barbarians invaded Augustine's home city in Northern Africa. Augustine's work, *City of God*, created in this context the way Christians, for centuries, viewed the nature of sin and theodicy: "...when He exposes us to adversity, it is either to prove our perfections or correct our imperfections; and in return for our patient endurance of the suffering of time, He reserves us for everlasting reward."<sup>49</sup>

In the midst of crisis and war, Christians needed a central figure to rally around, and Augustine's work brought calm to the chaos of thoughts as he worked to explain to a Christian community not so far removed from Christ's ascension why Christ had not yet returned. Augustine and other theologians had to fill the mental gap, allowing Christians to continue to live in hope among despair.

### *On the Road*

As a young man of 12<sup>th</sup> century Italy, Francis Bernardone (c. 1181-1226) was not much different from his peers. He was a secularist and a self-indulged son of a well-to-do family. However, even from a young age, Francis was well known for his charity to the poor, and even though he had a strong aversion to lepers, was known to give them the

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<sup>49</sup>McDermott, *The Great Theologians*, 60.

kiss of peace: "...strengthened by God's grace, he was able to obey the command and to love what he had hated and to abhor what he had hitherto wrongfully loved."<sup>50</sup>

Francis, or as he is better known St. Francis of Assisi, later founded a monastic order. In 1209, he heard Matthew 10:5-14 read, and found his vocation.<sup>51</sup> Many people flocked to him and likewise took up the mission. He founded the Franciscans on three principles: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell all that thou hast and give it to the poor and thou shalt find treasure in heaven;" "Take nothing with you on the journey;" and "He that wilt come after Me let him deny himself."<sup>52</sup>

The story of St. Francis and the perverse leper best illustrates a life spent in service to the marginalized. A leper was impatient and bitter and would not receive the care of the brothers, so Francis came and prayed for the leper and prepared to help the man himself. Instead of helping the leper in the same way the brothers had tried, Francis asked the man how he wanted to be helped. The leper said he wanted to be washed because he could not stand his own smell. Francis did this and "...By Divine miracle, where St. Francis touched him with his holy hands, the leprosy departed, and the flesh remained perfectly sound. And as the flesh began to heal, so the soul began to heal, so

<sup>50</sup> "Meet St. Francis." *Christian History* (August 8, 2008), <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ch/news/2007/sept13.html?start=2> (accessed May 11, 2012).

<sup>51</sup> "These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: 'Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give. 'Do not get any gold or silver or copper to take with you in your belts—no bag for the journey or extra shirt or sandals or a staff, for the worker is worth his keep. Whatever town or village you enter, search there for some worthy person and stay at their house until you leave. As you enter the home, give it your greeting. If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet."

<sup>52</sup> Ugolino di Monte Santa Maria and Mother Teresa, *The Little Flowers of St. Francis of Assisi*, ed. and trans. W. Heywood (New York, NY: Random House, Inc., 1998), xxxxv.

that the leper, seeing that he was beginning to be made whole, began to feel great remorse and repented for his sins, and to weep bitterly.”<sup>53</sup>

The story makes manifest that Francis healed the man of the inward leprosy that had made him bitter after he treated the outward leprosy, but what we can also take away from this moment is that Francis did not treat all lepers the same. Each leper has their own needs and cannot be treated the same as all other lepers. All lepers are not the same, all people are not the same, and all ministries cannot be the same. What works today with one youth or young adult to make them feel loved, when all they feel is dirty, would not necessarily work with another. The Brothers of his Order were no less faithful, but the way in which Francis first dealt with the lepers physical needs led to the man’s realization of the state of his soul. A person’s basic physical wounds must be treated before they can notice the spiritual wounds.

Who are the lepers of the current age? LGBTQ? Youth? The homeless? People of other races? The fact is that anyone can suffer great spiritual wounds because of twisted theologies and ignorant people. Reconciling Christians following in St. Francis’ footsteps must strive to be instruments of the peace as he taught in the name of Jesus.

In the same time frame that St. Francis was spreading a message of healing, The Inquisition began hundreds of years of fear-based rule in Europe. The Crusades of the 11<sup>th</sup> through 13<sup>th</sup> centuries were not only an attempt to regain the Holy Land, but seemed an attempt to destroy the Muslims and avenge the early Christian martyrs. The very idea of needing to *seek out and try heretics* shows the deep and disturbing sense of hubris residing within the Christian faith. Jesus warns that the entire world will not be able to

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<sup>53</sup>di Monte Santa Maria, *The Little Flowers*, 55.

accept the message in Mark 4:14-20<sup>54</sup> when he is explaining a parable to his followers.

Granted this is not an excuse to stop trying, but it is neither a Biblical mandate to kill the weeds. A little later in the next parable (Matthew 13:24-30) Jesus says to leave the weeds in peace until the end time, when the harvester will take care of them.<sup>55</sup> In this parable, wheat represents Christians and by removing the weeds (non-Christians) you do damage to the crop. Why would God, the Creator of Love and Mercy, want to damage his crop by having them perpetrate heinous crimes in God's name? Christianity has been fair in its intolerance: it is intolerant to everyone who is not part of its particular sect or denomination. It is easy to dislike someone for disagreeing with you.

In his book, *A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good*, Volf says that the cure to Christians hurting other Christians is not what would be expected: "The cure against Christian violence is not less of the Christian faith, but, in a carefully qualified sense, *more* of the Christian faith. I don't mean, of course, that the cure against violence lies in increased religious zeal; blind religious zeal is part of the problem. Instead, it lies in stronger more intelligent commitment to the Christian faith as faith."<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>"The farmer sows the word. Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. Others, like seeds sown on rocky places, hear the word and receive it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. Others, like the seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop – some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown."

<sup>55</sup>"No," he answered, 'because while you are pulling weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn."

<sup>56</sup> Miroslav Volf, *A Public Faith*, 40.

The most intelligent sort of Christian of his day, John Calvin was also a perfect example of the cure against the violent religious zeal that had preceded him. Losing his mother at an early age and being shipped off to boarding school by his emotionally remote father set the stage for John Calvin's (1509-1564) refugee status:

As a youth, Calvin experienced many things; nothing truly exceptional for young people of that time, but these experiences were rendered more acute through his conversion. Here we should think especially of his constant experience of being a stranger, of being on the road, of continually having to let go.<sup>57</sup>

Comparing Calvin as a young man to today's youth and young adults, we see many parallels. Many parents and youth ministers today could say identical things about their charges. Like Calvin in his time, today's youth and young adults are often loved and reviled in the same breath. Calvin was himself a refugee from France because the French Catholics persecuted Protestants living in another country and he attracted other refugees:

...he was a person who was forced to be independent early on; who followed his father's way and yet sought his own while doing so. He was one of those young students and academics open to new ideas, new challenges, new forms of church and scholarship. He brought a fresh approach; he was progressive, interested in renewal and driven by the new experience of life promoted by the renaissance and humanism.<sup>58</sup>

Further along down the road, in the place that would later become the United States of America, for the early Puritans, "The principle of exclusion applied not only to non-Christians, but also to many who professed belief in Jesus Christ: Jesuits, Quakers, as well as separatists from within the Puritan fold, such as Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson."<sup>59</sup> The trend of persecution based on religious ideology continued.

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<sup>57</sup>Selderhuis, *John Calvin*, 35.

<sup>58</sup>Selderhuis, *John Calvin*, 28.

<sup>59</sup>Gillian Lindt, "Heretics, Infidels, and Other Outcasts: Some Limits on Toleration," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* (1984): 416.

In 1638 Anne Hutchinson was tried and convicted on the possibility that “...someday she might lean toward moral licentiousness.”<sup>60</sup> Hutchinson’s (1591-1643) actual crime was having an opinion in the male dominated Puritan society and teaching it to others. She was excommunicated from her congregation and exiled.

Called “America’s first woman theologian,” at a symposium held by religious scholars and descendants of Hutchinson 350 years after her death, she was brought back into communion with the United Church of Christ and cleared of all charges.<sup>61</sup> Hutchinson was a woman who was a victim of her circumstances—she was bright, capable, and questioning—and she was punished for being who she was.

What would Hutchinson say to the modern youth and young adults? She would likely understand the confusion and persecution they feel as a result of the natural process of growing and questioning as matures and learns to become an independent thinker. Eiri, a 20-something year-old friend of the researcher wrote in a Facebook® conversation with her:

I’m not really sure what I believe in anymore...I’ve asked a lot of questions about how and why things are the way they are, and when I got answers to some of them, it made me look at the world from a whole new perspective, but I’m not sure if they’re the kind of questions that should be answered. After all, some things are better off left alone...I used to go to church with my grandparents all the time...It was after I graduated from high school that i [sic] started to drift away from religion because I started to see the world as it really was. A few people I’ve talked to about it just get so obsessed with trying to explain why they think they’re right that I decided to just not deal with it.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>Madeline Pecora Nugent, “Apologizing to Anne Hutchinson,” *Christian Century* 106 (1989): 304-305.

<sup>61</sup>Nugent, “Apologizing,” 305.

<sup>62</sup>EW, interview by Tracy Zielinski. Facebook® Conversation (May 23-29, 2012).

White slave holders used biblical texts to justify slavery in the colonies as early as 1670. The *others*, this time were non-Christian Africans torn from their homes and imported as slaves, a practice they learned from Muslims following the Crusades.<sup>63</sup> A study done by Stephen R. Haynes of fifty primary documents of the antebellum age used Noah's curse as the justification for slavery:

By the 1830s—when the American antislavery movement became organized, vocal, and aggressive—the scriptural defense of slavery had evolved into the ‘most elaborate and systematic statement’ of proslavery theory, Noah’s curse had become a stock weapon in the arsenal of slavery’s apologists and references to Genesis 9 appeared prominently in publications.<sup>64</sup>

Why did it take so long for the antislavery movement to rise? Between 1836-1846, the devastation caused by that one solitary chapter of the Bible spread into South Africa and became the white settlers’ justification to expand and subjugate the native tribes.<sup>65</sup> The Curse of Ham began to be associated too much with racism, so when the Herenigde Party established Apartheid in 1945 they looked to another scripture, Deuteronomy 32:8 and Acts 17:26 as their new justification, and they used the story of the Tower of Babel “as a warning against man’s sinful attempt to combine various groups of the human race who after that episode should live apart.”<sup>66</sup>

Because of Apartheid, South African activist Nelson Mandela (1918-2013) spent twenty-seven years in prison, a political prisoner and an icon of the struggle against racism. He refused to be released when the South African government required that his release come with conditions, and when he was unconditionally released by State

<sup>63</sup>Edwin N. Yamauchi, "The Curse of Ham," *Criswell Theological Review* 6 (2009): 53, 55.

<sup>64</sup>Yamauchi, "The Curse of Ham," 56.

<sup>65</sup>Yamauchi, "The Curse of Ham," 57.

<sup>66</sup>Yamauchi, "The Curse of Ham," 58.

President F.W. de Klerk on February 11, 1990, he set for himself a mission of “reconciliation, of binding wounds of the country, of engendering trust and confidence.”<sup>67</sup>

After his release, Mandela went on to become State President of South Africa and began the reconciliation process between the races: “His astonishing lack of bitterness contributed greatly to the spiritual dimension of his reconciliation and he has emerged as a towering figure representative of good humanity.”<sup>68</sup>

Mandela’s contemporary, Bishop Desmond Tutu (1931-present) fought Apartheid on a different front, through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Tutu was asked how the church universal could help against Apartheid. He responded that they should pray: “Our meeting with God through prayer, meditation and Bible study will only become reality once it also manifests in our attitudes towards our neighbours.”<sup>69</sup>

George Whitefield (1714-1770) would preach to anyone, anywhere. He found in the town of Bristol, f a group of people without a church who worked tirelessly in the coal mines and, rather than encouraging them to attend church—something that would have been hard for them to do—he went out and preached to them in the outdoors. What started out as a small group, expanded to multiple services, with thousands of attendees.<sup>70</sup> Whitefield’s time in Bristol was short, a mere six weeks, but what he started he did not want to end when he left for America, so Whitefield recruited John (1709-1791) and

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<sup>67</sup>B.J. de Klerk, "Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu: Living Icons of Reconciliation," *Ecumenical Review* 55, no. 4 (2003): 323.

<sup>68</sup>de Klerk, "Nelson Mandela," 325.

<sup>69</sup>de Klerk, "Nelson Mandela," 326.

<sup>70</sup>Arnold A. Dallimore, *A Heart Set Free* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1988), 78-80.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788) to take over the parish. At first, Charles Wesley was hesitant, “...ministering in the fields was directly contrary to his ecclesiastical principles.”<sup>71</sup>

John and Charles Wesley had already spent two years in Georgia learning what ordinary people did not want from religion, and now they had an opportunity to witness first-hand what they did want.<sup>72</sup> The Wesley's watched as Whitefield preached to an estimated 30,000 people and with Whitfield's departure, John, joined by his brother, took over the responsibility. Charles Wesley was a witness to the movement before joining the outdoor preachers, “I stood by G. Whitefield while he preached on the mount in Blackheath. The cries of the wounded were on every side. What has Satan gained by turning him out of the churches?”<sup>73</sup> As the Wesleys continued to make the world their parish, they found that Satan was not gaining anything, but was in fact losing the outcasts of the Anglican Church to a new kind of evangelism.

On April 2, 1739, J. Wesley took Whitefield's pulpit for the first time: “At four in the afternoon, I submitted to be more vile, and proclaimed in the highway the glad tidings of salvation, speaking from a little eminence in the ground adjoining the city, to about three thousand people.”<sup>74</sup> It was in the doing, the actual preaching to the people who needed him the most, that Wesley began to understand the purpose his ministry: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted; to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind; to set at liberty the bruised, to proclaim the acceptable

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<sup>71</sup>Dallimore, *A Heart Set Free*, 80.

<sup>72</sup>Hill, *A History of Christian Thought*, 213.

<sup>73</sup>Dallimore, *A Heart Set Free*, 81.

<sup>74</sup>Stephen Tomkins, *John Wesley: A Biography* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), 69.

year of the Lord (Luke 4:18-19).<sup>75</sup> The Wesley's had found their mission to the outcast blessed by the Lord.

Following the tradition of Calvin, came 19<sup>th</sup> century theologian Karl Barth (1886-1968). Barth, as a young clergy in Geneva, “believed that the Kingdom of God is a way of life that helps the disadvantaged, tries to abolish private property through ‘Christian socialism,’ and enlists fellow Christians in a nonviolent social reformation.”<sup>76</sup> Barth lived during World War I and theology brought no solace to his parishioners who lived with the constant sounds of war. Barth went on to write *Der Römerbrief (The Epistle to the Romans)* in 1919. Many found consolation in Barth as his theology “made sense of the failure.”<sup>77</sup>

In 1933, Barth rejected the teachings of the Nazi party and stood up to Jewish persecution. In 1935, Barth was punished for his stance by being banned from speaking publicly, fined, and fired from his teaching position. He moved to neutral Switzerland to escape further persecution.<sup>78</sup>

Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971) found his purpose after visiting the Ford automobile factories of Detroit: “Concerned for the welfare of the workers of Detroit, Niebuhr became involved in the social gospel movement, which campaigned for social reform in the name of Christian values.”<sup>79</sup> Niebuhr took up a crusade against Henry Ford and the Ford Company for the rights of the human workers who were members of his

<sup>75</sup>Tomkins, *John Wesley*, 69.

<sup>76</sup>McDermott, *The Great Theologians*, 171.

<sup>77</sup>McDermott, *The Great Theologians*, 172.

<sup>78</sup>McDermott, *The Great Theologians*, 172-173.

<sup>79</sup>Hill, *The History of Christian Thought*, 291.

church, but were treated by Ford as just another part of his factory equipment: "Machines that are worn out lie on the scrap heap rusting quietly, but human 'scrap' may cry out – and with luck someone may hear."<sup>80</sup>

Niebuhr worked tirelessly to find jobs for men who were no longer considered employable because they were too old and had been trained to work on a factory line and had only one skill. Niebuhr and his congregation began pressuring both Ford and the local community to address the ills of society. At the same time, Niebuhr began to reach out to other races, and invited them to join the churches as well.

### *Bringing People Together*

In India, Mother Teresa (1910-1997) dedicated her life to living among the outcasts of society: "What we do is nothing but a drop in the ocean. But if we didn't do it, the ocean would be one drop less."<sup>81</sup>

In her journal, she wrote about bringing the Gospel to people that no one else would dare to minister to: the poor, the untouchable caste, the lepers, the dying, and orphans. She so elegantly wrote:

We treat all people as children of God. They are our brothers and sisters. We show great respect to them. But they know very well that what I have is a treasure that I'd like to give them, and I am not afraid to tell them so. But I also tell them that faith is a gift of God. Our work is to encourage these Christians and non-Christians to do works of love. And every work of love, done with a full heart, always brings people closer to God. If they accept God in their lives, then they are co-workers. If they don't, it's their answer.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup>June Bingham, "Reinhold Niebuhr in Detroit," *Christian Century* (March 1961): 297.

<sup>81</sup>Teresa, *My Life*, 20.

<sup>82</sup>Teresa, *My Life*, 20.

Her heart broke for everyone she met. In some ways, all of humanity are broken dirty outcasts of one kind or another, and she treated all of humanity as equal. She was able to see that, like Francis' leper, her outcasts needed to be shown human love first and, having been shown love, then they could understand God's love.

In serving the poor, the hungry, the sick, the prisoner, Jesus taught in the parable of the sheep and the goats that his followers are serving him. "We nurse him, feed him, clothe him, visit him, comfort him in the poor, the abandoned, the sick, the orphan, the dying...I love him in the poor and the poor in him."<sup>83</sup>

What was true for Mother Teresa in 1985 continues to be true for the modern age and will continue to be true until Christ's return: "The biggest disease today is not leprosy or tuberculosis, but rather the feeling of being unwanted, uncared for, and deserted by everybody. The greatest evil is the lack of charity, the terrible indifference towards one's neighbor who lives at the roadside, the victim of exploitation, corruption, poverty, and disease."<sup>84</sup>

### *It Gets Better*

Christianity has come a long way since its beginnings as an underground religion persecuted by the authorities. In his *It Gets Better* entry, Bishop Gene Robinson of the Episcopal Church of New Hampshire, echoes the words of Mother Teresa: "I know that many of you might be feeling in a dark place right now because religion and religious people are telling you that you are an abomination before God... What I want to tell you,

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<sup>83</sup>Teresa, *My Life*, 25.

<sup>84</sup>Teresa, *My Life*, 52.

as a religious person, that they are flat-out wrong. God loves you beyond anything you can imagine. And God loves you the way you are.”<sup>85</sup>

The *It Gets Better Project* is a viral internet phenomenon and non-fiction book companion in which people from all walks of life, religion, age, and sexual preference speak directly to the pain and misery felt by the five gay teenagers who killed themselves in 2010 because of bullying. It is the project founder’s, Dan Savage’s attempt to make sure no more life is so senselessly lost.

With decades of debate over inclusion of LGBTQ into the life of the church, the spectrum of response to this kind of outcast is wide open. The United Church of Christ openly ordains gay clergy. After much debate, the United Methodist Church reaffirmed their stance on homosexuality at the 2012 General Conference, “The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching.”<sup>86</sup>

At the furthest side of the scale from the UCC’s position stands the Westboro Baptist Church: “Since 1955, WBC has taken forth the precious from the vile, and so is as the mouth of God (Jeremiah 15:19). In 1991, WBC began conducting peaceful demonstrations opposing the fag lifestyle of soul-damning, nation-destroying filth.”<sup>87</sup> When religious figures speak negatively against homosexuality, the perception for today’s youth and young adult culture is that they speak for the church universal.

<sup>85</sup>Dan Savage and Terry Miller, *It Gets Better* (New York, NY: Dutton, 2011): 30.

<sup>86</sup>The United Methodist Church, "Part IV Social Principles." *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*. 97-131. (Nashville, TN: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2008), 103.

<sup>87</sup>Westboro Baptist Church, “GodHatesFags.” <http://www.godhatesfags.com/index.html> (accessed May 22, 2012).

However, when they speak towards reconciliation and to integrate homosexuals into the fellowship, the perception is that they are only speaking for themselves.

In a survey done by Ed Stetzer in his book, *Lost and Found: The Younger Unchurched and the Churches that Reach Them*, 83% of unchurched youth indicates that their decision to attend church would be negatively impacted if the church did not welcome homosexuals. In the same survey, only 47% of the same respondents said that their decision to attend church would be negatively impacted if women were excluded from the pulpit.<sup>88</sup>

Even with those alarming figures, it is one voice at a time that can make up for the pain that organized religion has inflicted upon the LGBTQ outcasts. Bishop Mark S. Harmon, the presiding Bishop of the Lutheran Church in North America said in his *It Gets Better* piece: “I’ve listened with pain and shock to reports of young people taking their lives because they’ve been bullied or tormented for being different—for being gay or perceived as being gay. For being the people God created them to be.”<sup>89</sup>

People are leaving the church today in response to what they see as Christian intolerance of things outside the normative—homosexuality, race, bigotry, gender, gender identity. While not as systemic or as all pervasive as in other cases in history, intolerant Christians are nonetheless treating their brothers and sisters as *other* and excluding them from holy conversation and the communion of the saints. In this way, the church is perpetuating its own, hardly new, form of persecution:

The fact is that more men in our modern era are irreligious because religion has failed to make civilization ethical than because it has failed to maintain its

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<sup>88</sup>Stetzer, *Lost and Found*, 13-14.

<sup>89</sup>Minerva G. Carcaño, "An Urgent Message from Bishop Carcaño." Tampa, FL: Love Your Neighbor Collation, May 3, 2012.

intellectual respectability. For every person who disavows religion because some ancient and unrevised dogma outrages his intelligence, several become irreligious because the social impotence of religion outrages their conscience.<sup>90</sup>

Famous author and on again, off again Christian, Anne Rice has struggled with her identity as a Christian, and in interview with *The Huffington Post* she made a bold declaration of why she is no longer claiming membership in the Christian community:

Today I quit being a Christian. I'm out. I remain committed to Christ as always but not to being a 'Christian' or to being part of Christianity. It's simply impossible for me to 'belong' to this quarrelsome, hostile, disputatious, and deservedly infamous group. For ten years, I've tried. I've failed. I'm an outsider. My conscience will allow nothing else...In the name of Christ, I refuse to be anti-gay. I refuse to be anti-feminist. I refuse to be anti-artificial birth control. I refuse to be anti-Democrat. I refuse to be anti-secular humanism. I refuse to be anti-science. I refuse to be anti-life. In the name of Christ, I quit Christianity and being Christian. Amen.<sup>91</sup>

At the 2012 General Conference of The United Methodist Church, petitions about the full inclusivity of LGBTQ were introduced to the body. Bishop Minerva Carcaño of the Desert Southwest Conference of the United Methodist Church gave a recorded interview for the *Love Your Neighbor* website after the debate failed:

The language was cruel, the language was unChristian, the spirit was unholy. It is time, it is truly time, for the United Methodist Church to be an inclusive Church. Words have the power to harm and the power to heal. Sometimes the words of my Christian brothers and sisters have hurt you, and I also know that our silence causes you pain.<sup>92</sup>

There is hope, however that the youth of today will become leaders of tomorrow and their more ready acceptance of people for who and what God has made them—whatever that means in the future—will enable the Church to rise above the milieu of

<sup>90</sup>Reinhold Neibuhr, *Does Civilization Need Religion*. (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1927), 12.

<sup>91</sup>Jessie Kunhardt, "Anne Rice: 'I Quit Being A Christian,'" *The Huffington Post* (July 29, 2010), [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/07/29/anne-rice-i-quit-being-a\\_n\\_663915.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/07/29/anne-rice-i-quit-being-a_n_663915.html) (accessed May 11, 2012).

<sup>92</sup>Carcaño, "An Urgent Message," np.

“-ism” that continues to infect our church today. Recorded in *The Daily Christian Advocate*, the official recording of the 2012 General Conference of the United Methodist Church, Krin Ali’s Youth address warned the gathered body that there is still yet another outcast group: “Youth are the minority in the church when it comes to decision making.”<sup>93</sup>

The *Common Witness Coalition* is not just an organization dedicated to LGBTQ issues, but their Love Your Neighbor Statement on their website reads: “The invitation to Christ’s banquet table is for neighbors of every age, race, culture, nationality, theological perspective, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, mental and physical ability, economic condition, and marital status.”<sup>94</sup>

The Common Witness Coalition is made up of six Methodist-related organizations: Affirmation United Methodist, Black Methodists for Church Renewal, Methodist Federation for Social Action, National Federation of Asian American United Methodists and Reconciling Ministries. Other issues that the Common Witness Coalition championed at the 2012 General Conference were Undocumented Workers and Ending Profit from Suffering through divestment from Israel. The Common Witness Coalition is the new Francis and Teresa.

As a child, Christianity was bullied by its parents and neighbors. As a teenager, it changed its name to Catholic, moved out of the house, and got its revenge by beating up those who did not agree with it. As a young adult, it got divorced from those who lived in the East. As an adult it settled in and began to have children of its own, Lutherans,

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<sup>93</sup>Rich Peck, "Debate On Rules, Holy Conferencing, Follow Major Address," *Daily Christian Advocate: Daily Edition*. (June 2012): 1923.

<sup>94</sup>Common Witness Coalition, “Love Your Neighbor Statement.” <http://gc12.org/sign/love-of-god-and-neighbor-statement/> (accessed May 15, 2012).

Methodists, and Presbyterians. Once the children left the nest, Christianity had more time to spend on social issues, but it never let go of the wounds that hurt it in its infancy and, every once in a while, it forgets to practice what it preaches, and hurts those who are not like it.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### METHODOLOGY

#### Hypothesis

The youth and young adult fans of *anime* are an often misunderstood group that is exposed, on a regular basis, to spiritual concepts through their fandom. Fandom is a group of people who come together, in various levels of commitment, to enjoy a person or a body of work. Commonly understood fandoms are *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, *Glee*, Science Fiction/Fantasy, or Tom Cruise. In coming together to discuss and create a unique kind of scholarship around the topic of conversation, the group feels part of something larger than themselves. As fandom is not limited to fictional universes, even Christianity could be considered a fandom for Jesus Christ.

This project is specifically meant to help identify and re-engage de-churched (or formerly churched) youth and young adults, who have left the church because of prevailing attitudes of the Church to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, showing them progressive attitudes of individual church members by participating in their fandom and providing a safe, non-judgmental environment in which to explore a new fandom—Christianity.

In her book *Youth Ministry in a Post Christian World*, Brock Morgan resonates with the milieu that the researcher finds herself within:

The world is changing and it's changing us – in some ways for the better. It requires us to reconsider the ways in which we think about and interact with the

people around us. The good news is that thoughtful, humble, and curious Christians are making headway in today's world. However, many of us remain stuck in the old system and structures, using methods that were brilliantly effective at one time. But our culture has changed. And if we are honest, we'll admit that the things that once worked so well are no longer cutting it with our students.<sup>1</sup>

A better informed parent, youth leader, and/or church leader can/will engage with *anime* fan youth and young adults in meaningful dialogue both in spirituality and in fellowship. Coming alongside of *otaku* and incorporating them into the life of the church is a necessity in the present day church to strengthen the faith through diversity.

So we are a people who are needed to remind religious congregations not only of human diversity but also of the fact that all of us in all our diversity are made in the image of one dazzling diverse Spirit. If we insist that congregational worship must reflect that dazzlingly diversity, we shall do justice toward the entire human race and the national creation as well.<sup>2</sup>

The *anime* fandom is vast: "Anyone who takes the trouble to look closely discovers that, even in the most homogenous appearing groups, there are wide difference in knowledge, interest, experience and capabilities."<sup>3</sup> Some *anime* fans are interested in the production values, animation styles, and techniques; others are interested in the Japanese culture and history; some love the music and musicians; others enjoy making costumes or role-playing their favorite characters (cosplay); while another group may come simply to share and receive knowledge in a place where they feel they belong and are safe. Each has a different reason to join the fandom. There is no accurate way to represent such a wide spectrum of people. There can be no typical fan in such an atypical

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<sup>1</sup>Brock Morgan, *Youth Ministry in A Post-Christian World: A Hopeful Wake-Up Call* (San Diego, CA: The Youth Cartel, 2013), Kindle.

<sup>2</sup>Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, "We Came Bearing Gifts: Seven Lessons Religious Congregations Can Learn From Transpeople," in *Transformations*, eds. Lisa Isherwood and Marcella Althaus-Reid (London, England: SCM Press, 2009), 50.

<sup>3</sup>Davydd J. Greenwood and Morten Levin, *Introduction to Action Research: Social Research for Social Change* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 1998), 12.

group. It is only when the uninitiated joins the fandom that they gain trust and fellowship required for change: “We view liberating situations as those in which social change is possible and can be influenced by the participants.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Types of Methodology**

The research used to test a hypothesis of such a disparate group, therefore, must be flexible; “Meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting.”<sup>5</sup> In that respect, the researcher will use a mixture of qualitative research methods. Using an Advocacy and Participatory Worldview, considering Ethnography and Phenomenology, the researcher hopes to raise awareness of the issues:

Humans engage with their world and make sense of it based on their historical and social meaning bestowed upon us by our culture. Thus, qualitative researchers seek to understand context or setting of the participants through visiting this context and gathering information personally. They also interpret what they find, an interpretation shaped by the researcher’s own experiences and background.<sup>6</sup>

As a pretest, the researcher surveyed four constituent groups: *anime* Fans, people who make a professional life in the *anime* industry, *anime* Parents, and Youth Pastors. Mission and evangelism in the *anime* fandom requires becoming part of that fandom: “Stereotypically, missionaries are viewed either as naïve do-gooders or as religious

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<sup>4</sup>Greenwood, *Introduction to Action Research*, 12.

<sup>5</sup>John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Method Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2009), 8.

<sup>6</sup>“Ethnography is a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher studies an intact cultural group in a natural setting over a prolonged period of time by collecting, primarily observational and interview data. (Creswell, 2007b). The research process is flexible and typically evolves contextually in response to the live realities encountered in the field setting. “Phenomenological research is a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experience about the phenomenon described by participants. Understanding the lived experiences marks phenomenology as a philosophy as well as a method, and the procedure involves studying a small number of subjects through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop patterns and relationship of meaning (Moustakas, 1994).” “One of the key elements of collecting data in this way is to observe participants’ behavior by engaging in their activities.” Creswell, 13.

fanatics. Though there are plenty who fit this image, recent generations of missionaries are considerably more sophisticated. Some groups are basically popular educators who operate by trying to live out their ideology in local communities, contributing labor and resources to projects of value to the people.”<sup>7</sup>

The researcher and her husband have embraced the fandom. In 2006, the Zielinskis attended their first three-day convention, *Anime Festival Orlando*. They attended in normal civilian clothing and roamed the hallways and panels, gaping at the colorful fauna. Within six months, they had attended their next convention in cosplay attire. In 2007, the researcher joined GoAnimeTV.com as an off-camera reviewer for a monthly podcast. Her reviews were aired on the broadcast and read by one of *anime*’s premiere voice actors, and host of the show, Johnny Yong Bosch. Since 2006, the author and her husband have participated in no less than three conventions yearly, including: *Anime Festival Orlando*, Janicon, Necronomicon, MetroCon, PariahCon, Supercon, *Anime Day Tampa*, *Anime Day Orlando*, Khaoticon, and *Anime Experience Orlando*.

The researcher has been a panelist (or presenter) at two Metrocons (2011 and 2012, comprising five panels) and four Necromonicons (2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 comprising ten panels). The researcher has fully participated in the Con life, from winning second place in a video game tournament at Pariah Con, to winning a costume contest at Supercon, to attending late night, *after-hours* panels restricted to those over eighteen years old, to watching Sunday morning cartoons, to joining a voice actor fan club luncheon.

She has sat in on discussion panels, danced at midnight raves, attended VIP parties with Voice-over Actors (VOA) and directors, role-played, consoled sad children

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<sup>7</sup>Greenwood, *Introduction to Action Research*, 231.

whose parents did not understand their obsessions with fictional characters, loitered in hallways watching people, and even decked out her car in the fandom.

Fandom does not exist solely in the forum of the convention, so the researcher and her husband received permission to start a monthly *anime* Club at their church in 2010, in order to provide a friendly, safe environment in which fans could gather and share their passion. The church's only caveat was that the *anime* portray Christian values and themes. The group is small, sometimes as few as four people but on other occasions has filled the room to capacity.

The researcher lives and breathes the fandom, seeking out new experiences and is actively learning Japanese. The researcher is a person who can sit down with another fan and begin speaking and bonding within minutes. Out of this passion comes the project.

### **Pre-project Research and Model of Implementation**

#### *First Triangulated Survey*

The first part of this triangulated survey was activated and aimed at *anime* fans. The first survey was split into three parts. The first to take the survey were people the researcher personally knew who were *anime* fans, and these were sent out by personal email or Facebook®. There were six questions:

The first question of the survey was, “What are your favorite *anime/manga*. Why?” This is an important question because it identifies the fandom of *otaku*. Some *otaku* only like one *anime* to the exclusion of others. Some *otaku* are fans of multiple *anime*. Knowing which kind of *otaku* a person is facilitates conversation.

The second question was, “Do you attend conventions or belong to an *anime/manga* Club? If so, which, for how long and why?” The researcher felt it was necessary to establish if this person was available in a public forum to be approached. An *otaku* who does not visit conventions or does not belong to a club would not be in a position for evangelism except for a personal, already established, one-on-one relationship.

The third question was, “Has a fellow fan asked you about your spiritual beliefs or shared their beliefs with you? If so, explain.” This question is to establish a baseline and show the prevalence of spiritual conversation among the community. In the same vein, the fourth question was designed to test the depth of previous spiritual connections: “If you attend cons, have you ever been to a panel where the main topic has been spirituality or religion? If so, what was the panel about and if you can remember, which con?”

The last set of questions was, “What is your spiritual background and current practice, if any?” and “Basic Identifying Questions: Age, Race, State of Residency, and Gender.” This background information shows the diversity of the *otaku*.

Two more groups were given the same set of questions to provide triangulation of the data and add diversity. The first group, being known associates of the researcher, could have skewed the data without further information. The second set of responses were from *anime* fans unknown to the researcher, and were solicited from Metrocon and Anime Festival Orlando’s Facebook® page. These groups were approached only by saying that the researcher was doing a project for school and needed respondents. They were not initially told of the nature of the survey. Only one person who agreed to take the

survey failed to return it. These respondents were asked the same questions as the others, but were not known by the researcher.

The third group was also anonymous and came from two online internet forums: Christian Anime Alliance and MyAnimeList.Net. They were asked the same questions. These two sub-groups provided the most unique insight, because one of the forums was explicitly Christian and, for the most part, their answers reflected that. The other is overtly secular and their answers provided a wider range of answers. Both groups were given the survey on the website so that they could read and decide if they wanted to take it before responding.

The next part of the triangulation came from *anime* professionals, defined as someone who works in the production of *anime*, such as Voice Over Artists (VO), Directors, or Additional Dialogue Replacement Artists (ADR). The researcher sent her survey via Facebook<sup>®</sup> and email to twenty of these people. The impetus to question these people was their influence on *otaku*. She received responses from eight individuals to the following questions:

“Has a con attendee asked you about your spiritual beliefs or shared their beliefs with you? If so, explain.” Working off a similar question asked to *otaku*, this question is designed to test the theory that *otaku* are interested in sharing their beliefs with others.

The professionals were then asked “How long have you been on the con circuit? On average how many cons do you attend each year?” Answers to the first question had to be tempered with answers to the second. A professional that does not attend conventions on a regular basis would not have as much exposure to *otaku* as those who attend one every weekend. They were then asked about their spiritual background and

current practices to determine how open they would be to religious discussion and what sort of influence they would have on *otaku*.

Again, asking the basic identifying questions of age, race, state of residency and gender show the diversity of the respondents. The voice actors were very helpful. Most of them requested more information on the project when it was completed.

The final part of this survey was aimed at the parents of SCUMC and was a two-page questionnaire about the things their children watch, read, and love, including favorite color and best friend. The survey was developed in conjunction with one of the researcher's peer associates. The respondents were asked questions such as, "What is your child's favorite book?" and then asked whether they knew that information or if they had to ask the child. All members of the congregation with children at home, regardless of age, were asked to fill out the survey. The researcher chose to give this survey to find out if the children of SCUMC church members actually like *anime/manga* without their parent's knowledge.

#### *PowerPoint® Visual Comfort Test*

The second test was developed to measure the comfort level of the subjects based only on appearance. The PowerPoint® had sixteen different photographs of young people aged fifteen to twenty-five in different styles of dress and with varied expressions. The purpose of this questionnaire was to establish a baseline empathy/comfort level of the participants in the *Anime Spirituality* class at SCUMC. The respondents were asked to rate on a scale of:

1 Strongly Agree; 2 Agree; 3 Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4 Disagree; 5 Strongly Disagree, the following questions:

- A. I would feel comfortable talking to this person in a public space.
- B. I would feel comfortable inviting this person to my church.
- C. This person would feel welcome at my church.
- D. I would feel comfortable sitting next to this person in church.
- E. This person is a Christian.

The first group to take this test was the Adult Sunday School class of SCUMC which is led by contextual associate Mark Capron. The class is open, meaning that anyone can join it at any time and on the day of the test, it was made up of nine individuals. Five of the nine were male, one Black, the others White, and all of them were members of the Church, five of which serve on the Church Council. Of the class, one was in his forties, two were in their fifties, and the remaining six were in their seventies.

The group was told that they would serve as a control group for the rest of the groups who would later take the test. They were eager and took the task very seriously. Marty, a fifty-something year-old man, said, during the survey, that he thought question B (I would feel comfortable inviting this person to my church) should have been easier to answer. This off-the-cuff, unsolicited remark is very telling, as Marty has been part of the Mission and Evangelism team for fourteen years and has children who fit into the categories represented in the test.

After the test was completed, Brian said that he would not feel comfortable approaching any of the young ladies, but would speak to them if they approached him first. He said this was conditioning, as he did not want to appear to be a creepy old man talking to a young girl. Linda also approached the researcher after the test and away from

the rest of the group, asking her to tell her about the people she had just seen. She confided that all her answers were based on the people's eyes alone.

Each answer sheet was designated by a number, one through nine so as to retain the participants' privacy so that they could feel that they would not be judged by the researcher for their answers.

Later that same day, the researcher gave the same test to The TBD Anime Club. They were given the same instructions and were told that they would be a control group against which the other groups taking the test would be judged.

The group was small that night, consisting of only six people. There were an equal number of men and women. All of the members present were White. Half of the group were members of SCUMC, none of them were in leadership roles. One member was under fourteen, two members were between the ages of fifteen to nineteen, one member was between the ages of twenty to twenty-nine, and two members were in their forties. The main difference between the groups was that one of the members of The TBD Anime Club, a former member of SCUMC, was included in the pictures (his permission was requested and received before the test was administered). He and his brother were in attendance for the test and were asked to treat the photos as if he was a stranger. They both did a remarkable job of doing so, but the group shared a great deal of laughter afterward.

Each answer sheet was designated by a number, one through eight in Japanese so as to retain the participants' privacy so that they could feel that they would not be judged by the researcher for their answers.

The third group to take the test was the researcher's peer group, including her mentor and faculty advisor, and was the only survey not taken in the context of SCUMC. The group consisted of three men and three women, three Black/African-American and three White. Two members of the group were fifty to fifty-nine, two were sixty to sixty-nine and two were seventy to seventy-nine.

Each answer sheet was designated by a letter, Alpha through Zeta in Greek, so as to retain the participants' privacy so that they could feel that they would not be judged by the researcher for their answers.

The final group to take the test consisted of the participants of the *Anime Spirituality Class*. On that first day, surprisingly, some of the people the researcher anticipated to join the class did not, and a few of those who did join were completely unexpected. Two members of the Adult Sunday School joined the class and two members of The TBD Anime Club did as well. Of the entire class, four were members of the Context Associates. This was the first group to have a complete discussion of the people included in the photographs after the test was complete.

Each member of the class has been given an *anime* character's name for the purposes of the survey and their privacy in the study. The characters were assigned based on the correct gender.

Photograph 1, a full face shot of a young, white, androgynous person in glasses, was the one and only time the researcher answered the question about the gender of one of the subjects. I mistakenly told the Adult Sunday School that this person was a girl. Afterwards, I repeated the *mistake* with each group so that it would be consistent. The subject of Photograph 1 and Photograph 10 are the same person. In Photograph 10, she

appears in a black and white costume with a hat and a long braid. Her gender is not obvious. She is a professional massage therapist that the researcher met at *Anime Experience Orlando*.

The class member designated Emishii, a white male between the ages of forty to forty-nine and a member of The TBD Anime Club, is a registered nurse. When he saw Photograph 10, he immediately commented that he saw what I was doing. Afterward, he said that his professional training required that he be able to recognize a person after only seeing them once. He had an advantage over the rest of the group, who did not realize any of the subjects were repeated.

Photograph 2 is the only time this subject appears. He is a cheerful young, white, male standing in front of curtains. He has an open-mouthed smile. He has unkempt hair and you can see his shoulders. He is a professional video game designer and the researcher met him at *Anime Festival Orlando*.

Photograph 3 is a young, white, female with long flowing curly blonde hair. She is posed next to a Tiffany lamp. She is featured later in Photograph 11 as the bespectacled, androgynous person wearing a red wig and a black vest. This woman was one of the respondents from the Triangulated Survey who contacted the researcher as part of the Metrocon Facebook® page post and the researcher has never meet her in person.

Photograph 4 is a young, white, female with straight blonde hair and has an open-mouthed smile. She is wearing a pink kimono, but is only pictured from the chest up. She is standing in an indoor location that is not distinguishable in the photograph. There are people noticeably behind her, but do not distract from her. She is also the subject of Photograph 12, with a purple wig and large glasses. She is a frequent panelist at Florida

conventions, where she speaks on the subjects of sewing and traditional Japanese attire. She runs her own convention in Jacksonville and the researcher first met her at *Anime Festival Orlando*.

Photograph 5 is an androgynous, white person in a graduation cap and gown holding a diploma from a recognizable private college in Florida. The person is smiling, but their lips are closed. The same subject is featured in Photograph 13, in a white wig and blue velvet suit with a white cravat. The subject's gender is not clear. This person is a transgender female to male. He works as a game designer and the researcher first met him at *Anime Festival Orlando*.

Photograph 6 is a young, white, male. It is the only black and white photograph and appears to be a professional headshot, the kind used in modeling or acting. He is looking up at the camera. He is also the same person featured in Photograph 14 which at first glance is an androgynous being wearing a black and white mask with large goggles. Only one eye is visible in the side view pose. This man was one of the respondents from the Triangulated Survey that contacted the researcher as part of the *Anime Festival Orlando*'s Facebook® page post and the researcher has never meet him in person.

Photograph 7 is a member of The TBD Anime Club and a former member of SCUMC. He has been away from SCUMC as a member for about six years. The quality of the image suggests it was taken with a cell phone. The photograph is a modified head shot that shows a few inches of shoulders wearing a dark blue shirt. He is young, white and male. He has dark hair that partially obscures his forehead and one eye. He has a handlebar mustache. This is the only time he appears. The researcher has known this young man since he was in elementary school.

Photograph 8 is a young, white, male using a sewing machine. He is shown in profile. He also appears in Photograph as a red-headed, mask wearing, bare-chested man in a ripped outfit holding a large sword. This man is a professional cosplayer who is paid to be a special guest at conventions. He runs his own website where he gives support to the cosplay community through costuming, dieting, and exercise. He is known to the researcher through Facebook®.

Photograph 9 is the only African-American/Black person in the test. She was added for two reasons: she is a typical *anime* fan, and because of her race. The researcher had one woman who identified herself as Black in the Adult Sunday School and also a separate Black woman in The TBD Anime Club. The researcher hoped to find out if race would influence the comfort level of the primarily white congregation. She has red streaks in her hair and yellow contact lenses. She responded as part of the Triangulation Survey and the Metrocon Facebook® page and the researcher has never met her.

Photograph 15 is the last person to appear only once. She is a young, white, female with red hair and a pair of twisted goat-like horns on her head. The quality of the picture suggests it was taken with a cell phone. She is very pale and has dark lipstick. She is showing some cleavage, but nothing distasteful. She is a professional stagehand and works for Busch Gardens. This is a costume she wore for her part in Howl-o-Scream.

Initial results show that people were made uncomfortable by different things and were very consistent within their results. For example, one woman felt more comfortable with all the other women and extremely uncomfortable with men. Most of the women respondents seemed to be more accepting and comfortable than the men respondents. The TBD Anime Club was less accepting and less comfortable than the Adult Sunday School

Class. This was not surprising, as *anime* fans tend to be more introverted than the average person. The person most people were the least comfortable with was Photograph 7, the member of The TBD Anime Club and a former member of SCUMC. Interestingly enough, more people were comfortable or accepting of Photograph 16 than 7. The researcher's initial thought on this is that Sixteen was an obvious costume, while 7 was more likely to be the actual person.

### *Origami Crane Experiment*

The last method of pre-test research came from the inspiration of the researcher's peer group. The group originally had a hard time understanding what the researcher was trying to accomplish with *anime* and theological studies. So, when the group came down to Florida for a peer session, the researcher showed the group a half-hour episode of the *anime Trinity Blood* and then did a traditional Japanese activity with them—making origami cranes. As she taught the group about her ministry with *anime* fans, she also taught them how to fold. Crease by crease, fold by fold, frustration after frustration, the group completed their origami cranes and gained a better understanding about what the researcher was doing. At the end of the object lesson, the researcher took her own crane and crumpled it and smashed it to the table. “This,” she said, “is what happens when you don’t do ministry with these people compassionately.” The group then understood.

Having had such a successful attempt at this object lesson, the researcher decided to add one uniquely Japanese activity to each class session. The first was making origami cranes. Unlike the peer group, (who were obligated to participate) each member of the

class was there because the class sounded interesting to them and they wanted to take part in the class.

This experiment would be repeated on the final day of class and their cranes would be compared to see if any relevant data could be found. Two of the members of the class had already made second cranes after the completion of the first class, but those were not recorded, as they had not had enough time to absorb the learning. One member, Sakura, who has already completed two cranes, was so excited that she could teach her granddaughter how to make a crane, talked about how much fun the class was and increased our enrollment by two in the following weeks.

The goal of the class was for the researcher to introduce five new people to *anime* and broaden the perspective of at least that many people who were already familiar with the genre, all with the goal of helping them use *anime/manga* as an example of how to reach out in mission and evangelism. Four people who knew nothing about *anime* joined the class on the first day. Sakura, Tohru, Manji and Rukia (an occasional member who did not attend the first class) learned what *anime* was and how to recognize its spiritual elements. Manji's mother also joined for the last three classes.

The researcher was much more successful with broadening the perspective of people who were already familiar with *anime*. Daisuke, Emishii, Ryosuke, and Lave, along with Tamama (Ryosuke's wife who attended two classes in the middle of the project) were now learning the spiritual elements of a familiar genre. Ryosuke went so far as to attend his first *anime* convention after only three weeks of class when he went with

the researcher to Khaotic Kon.<sup>8</sup> No matter their previous experience, the class practiced these skills so that they could actively engage with the culture as a friendly, non-threatening presence in the lives of *anime* fans.

The two greatest moments of the class proved to the researcher that this project and class were worthwhile. The first came when the researcher mentioned at dinner with her students that if she ever did this again at SCUMC, she would extend the class by one day to include *Trigun*. Two of the members did not wait for her to finish her thoughts, but said they would both come back for another week, making the class seven weeks in total. The second moment was when Manji, a church leader and frequent Bible School teacher said *Anime Spirituality* was one of the best Bible studies he had ever taken.

The class was also invited to attend a meeting of The TBD Anime Club. The *anime* being shown that night was *Samurai Champloo*, which the class had watched and discussed the Wednesday before. Three members of the class attended that night and returned the following month to watch *Initial D* with The TBD Anime Club. Tohru brought her grandson and two of his friends with her that night.

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<sup>8</sup>Khaotic Kon is an *anime* convention in Tampa, FL. For more information, visit their website at <http://www.khaotickon.com/>.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **FIELD EXPERIENCE**

As varied as the Anime Community tends to be, the researcher decided to begin research in a broad way, hoping to capture a picture of the community in one moment of time and sharpen the focus of the research as the intervention drew nearer. In the same way, the congregation of SCUMC was also tested first as a congregation, then later as individual classes, and finally, as the intervention group itself.

#### **Results of Parent Survey**

Overall, the Parent's Survey was very disappointing. Only six members responded, with the best participation coming from young parents with children under the age of three. The information was therefore inconclusive.

The most interesting response came from a mother of an adopted child. Her husband is a member of The TBD Anime Club and a contextual associate, so the researcher gave the survey to the mother to get a different perspective. She kept the survey for four weeks without reading it, and when the woman ran into the researcher at church one Wednesday evening, she panicked. She called her daughter out of a class and made her sit down with the researcher to answer the questions. The mother seemed to have not, at any point, read the survey that was designed to test the parents. The daughter was visibly annoyed at leaving her activity, and the researcher rushed through the questions, knowing that they would have to be thrown out.

## Results of the Anime Fan Survey

Surveys across the three groups – known associates of the researcher, anonymous respondents from Metrocon and *Anime Festival Orlando*, and respondents from *anime-related forums*—give a good cross-section of the *anime* fans.

A little over half (55%) of the otaku professed Christian belief. These Christians included Catholics, United Methodists, Pentecostal, Baptist, and non-denominational. Atheists made up 18% of the respondents. Mixed spiritual beliefs made up 12%, those being people who claimed more than one system of belief including Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, and Shinto. Those identifying as having no spiritual beliefs also measured 12%. Buddhists made up the smallest group at 2%. It is interesting to note that Rainer and Rainer's study in *The Millennials: Connecting to America's Largest Generation* recorded very different results with the same generation:

Relatively few Millennials chose other religions. Judaism, Hindu, Muslim, Wiccan, and pagan were selected by 2 percent or less. But, surprisingly, atheism (God does not exist) was the preference of 6 percent. Agnosticism (uncertain or doubtful that God exists) was selected by 8 percent. And 14 percent had no preference at all. Those three categories total 28 percent. Nearly three out of ten Millennials have moved completely away from certain beliefs in God.<sup>1</sup>

The open-ended question in the intervention allowed the respondents to talk about their spirituality without a framework. As an example of a complete answer, a thirty-one-year-old Caucasian woman from Florida shared her current spiritual beliefs:

I was Christian for the majority of my life. In my early 20's I started questioning and reevaluating my belief structure and ultimately settled that there is no god. I still like and respect Christianity and all other religions. I still follow most Christian ideals because they make sense - I just don't think god (as a distinct

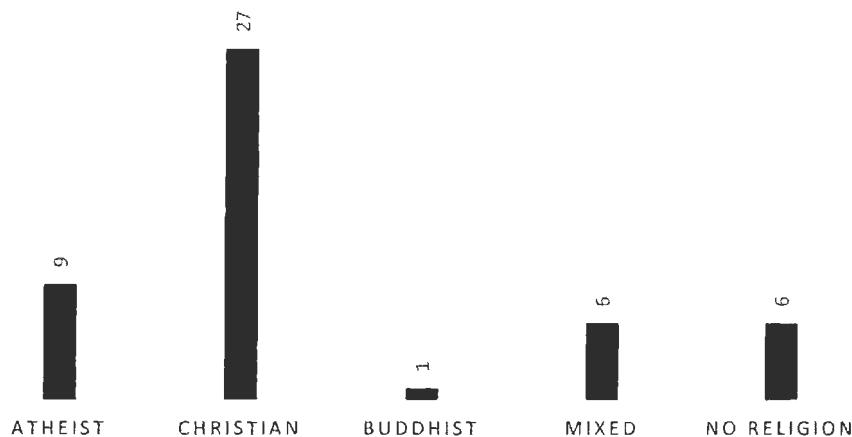
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<sup>1</sup>Thom S. Rainer and Jei Rainer, *The Millennials: Connecting to America's Largest Generation* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2011), 231.

being or manifestation) exists. I occasionally go to a Unitarian Universalist church. They are open to all belief structures, so I feel very comfortable there.<sup>2</sup>

A twenty-three year old man from Texas discussed his current spiritual beliefs: "I occasionally summon demons to do my bidding....Agnostic." A twenty-three year old woman from Devon, England expressed her belief as: "Catholic on paper, Agnostic in reality. I still celebrate Christmas though, and I'll buy an Easter egg at Easter."

Table 5:1 - Anime Respondents  
By Professed Spiritual Beliefs



The results suggest that *otaku*, in general, have spiritual beliefs and, with a solid 30% belonging to Atheists and those with no religion, there is a mission field waiting for seeds to be planted.

Of that same group, 38% of the respondents had never talked to any *otaku* about their spiritual beliefs outside of their immediate family, leaving 62% who have, suggesting that the conversation has not been saturated.

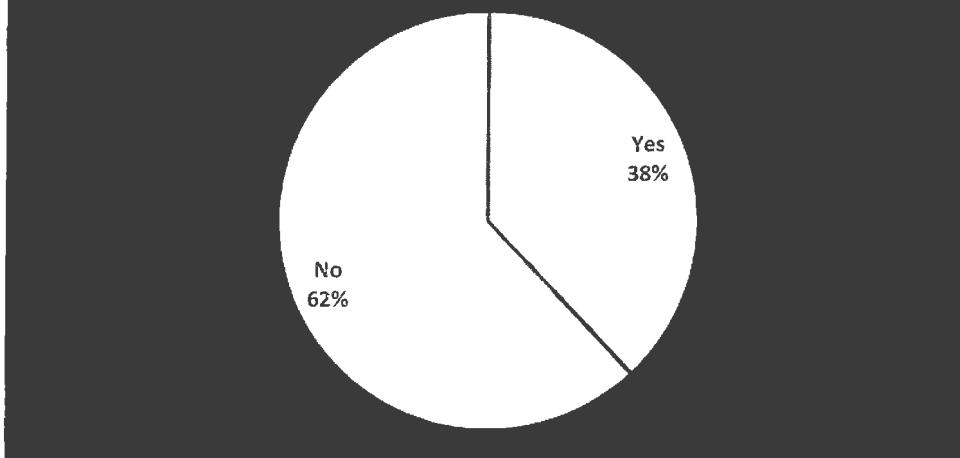
A twenty-one-year-old Caucasian male spoke about sharing his spiritual beliefs with other *otaku*. He is also a member of The TBD Anime Club:

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<sup>2</sup>Answers were not edited for content, but are the original words of the respondents, including all grammar and spellings.

I have in the past, most of whom were close friends. We discussed our views (rarely, but when we did, often in a group as it was during High School Years), and I appreciated it, because I've found a lot of fellow fans and friends often have different views, and stick to them while at the same time do not put down the views of others for being different. I think, all in all, what we decide to take away from our experiences and the philosophy of others has a big part in how we view religion, morals, and who we want to be, and hearing the views of others (without the stress of someone later looking down on you for your beliefs) can be a great thing. I've found other fans to be more accepting of others in that aspect, which is one thing I love about the anime community.

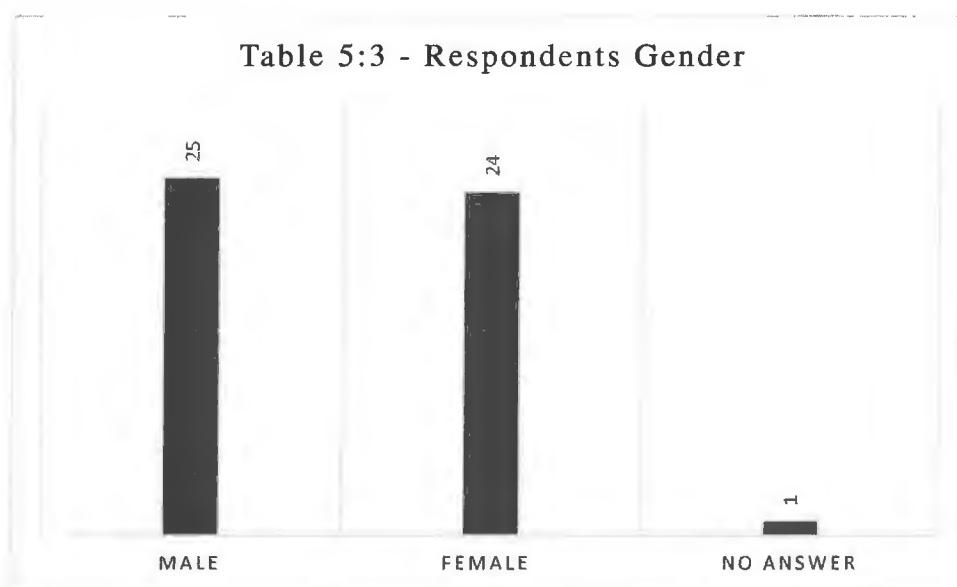
Table 5:2 - Have You Talked to Other Fans About Your Spiritual Beliefs?



Attendance at *Anime* conventions or clubs was 69% attending, versus 31% not attending. Those who do not attend—and responded with a reason—fall into two categories: those who choose not to attend and those who cannot afford to attend. The data suggest that attending a convention or club will put an evangelist into contact with a higher percentage of the total *anime* fans.

A thirty-two year old white male from Florida reflected about his way of sharing: “Yes. I have had many spiritual conversations over *Evangelion* and other more philosophical anime that have allowed me to share my beliefs in a more acceptable way than traditional evangelism.” The breakdown of gender was equally represented among the respondents. The one who did was part of an online forum.

Table 5:3 - Respondents Gender



The respondents, answering voluntarily—even those personally approached by the researcher—does not accurately represent the full diversity of ethnicities in the *otaku* community. Of those responding, 69% were Caucasian. It is the researcher's experience that that percentage is accurate. The percentage of other ethnicities, however is not properly reflective, as every year greater diversity appears.

Table 5:4 - Respondents Ethnicity

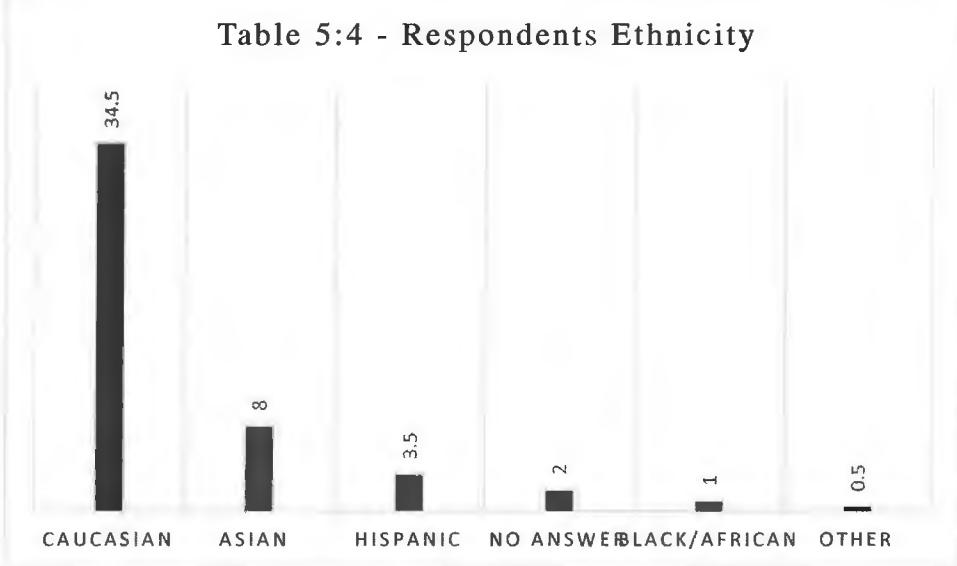
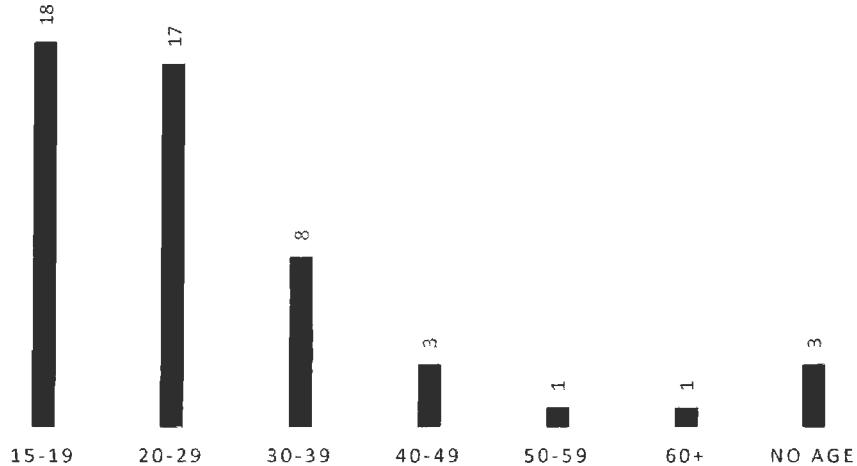


Table 5:5 - Respondents by Age



As for the additional questions on the survey, most of the answers were varied and showed no consistent information relevant to the project.

#### *Results of the Anime Professionals Survey*

Seven voice actors answered my emails or Facebook® direct messages. Their answers varied widely, from concise and blunt to detailed and thorough. Of those, six were male and one was transgender. As a group they have been attending conventions for an average of seven years; the newest of the group having attended conventions for as few as three years, and the most senior of the actors having attended for over fourteen years. Between them, they average ten conventions in any given year. Two of the group attend two conventions a year, while two attend more than twenty a year.

When asked if they had ever talked to convention attendees about their faith, the answers were on each end of the spectrum. A thirty-eight year-old, Hispanic male from Texas, who is a non-denominational Christian and an established convention guest, talked about his experience:

I have been asked about my spiritual beliefs many times and have had attendees share with me their spiritual beliefs. Usually in the context that they have somehow found out I am a Christian and share with me that they also are and that they appreciate my candor and transparency about it.<sup>3</sup>

Another voice actor, a forty-seven year-old white male from Texas who describes himself as a Zen-Baptist, also has had experience talking about faith with attendees: "I've had quite a few people come up and talk to me about their spiritual beliefs, probably because I make no bones about my spirituality. Some of them come up angry, some come up interested and many come up wanting to share the way they feel."

One voice actor who identified as a fifty year-old white male from California said: "They ask me ALL THE TIME. And I take every opportunity to share it. I do so in panels, holding services at cons, email, one on one.... any way possible."

The other four voice actors indicated that they had never spoken to any convention attendee about faith. The most interesting answer came from a forty year-old male from California who was raised in a secular household by a European mother and a secular Jewish father. He is a voice actor who is well-known for his panels on mythology and *anime*:

Even though I give presentations on mythology and storytelling, I almost never get asked what my personal spiritual beliefs are. I'm not sure why. I also feel no need to share if not asked. My goal in my presentations is to present the different mythological options available so people realize that they can chose the spiritual story for themselves that they find most appealing.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>These interviews were conducted on Facebook® by direct messages on September 20, 2012. The names are withheld to protect the privacy of the individuals interviewed.

<sup>4</sup>This interview was done by email on October 7, 2012. The name is withheld to protect the privacy of the individual interviewed.

## Intervention

The intervention took place over a nine week period (eight of which had one on one programming and the ninth was necessary due to illness). Session One was an introduction and pretest day in which all six of the participants who completed the full class were present.

### Session One

The researcher first gave the PowerPoint® pre-test to establish a baseline of the participants' comfort with the physical traits of young people in the average *otaku* age range. After that was completed, the researcher lead the group through an *origami* exercise designed to introduce the participants to the world of outside ministry and evangelism. Fold by fold, the researcher used the complicated steps of *origami* to acquaint the participants with how difficult it is to learn something new. The class' cranes were much better than the researcher's peer group, as the instructions were provided in both oral and written forms, to take into account that everyone learns differently.

Emishii did not wait for instruction, but began immediately working it out from the written example. The researcher also added vocabulary to the instruction, teaching about the language of *otaku* and naming the landscape in which they exist. Tohru, Daisuke, and Sakura followed the researcher's instruction well enough to complete the crane without assistance. Ryosuke got lost halfway through, did not admit it, and only stopped when he became frustrated. Manji was late for the class and did not make the crane.

The first homework assignment asked the participants to discuss the ways in which they have felt like an outsider in the past and they were given time to finish the

homework in class. Tohru finished the homework while Sakura and Ryosuke asked for a second attempt at the crane.

The homework responses were short, but for a first class when rapport and trust have not yet been established in the group, this was expected. Most participants did not go deep, but some of the answers were surprising.

Tohru said:

From 1<sup>st</sup> memory until adulthood I felt like an outcast. Getting married at 19 made me feel a little more normal. I deal with it by doing things that scare me, doing many different things, joining different groups. Maybe I'm looking for my place where I'll feel totally at home. Don't know if I'll get there in this lifetime.

Likewise, Ryosuke empathized with feeling like an outsider: "In Jr. High I became extremely introverted and associated with a limited peer group."

Sakura, however said: "Never really felt that far removed but have felt left out/unnoticed and slowly learned to be a bit more assertive! If it continues, I tend to move away from the place/people/etc. and find something else!"

Sakura's response shows a very different philosophy than any of the other participants and in the researcher's experience, most *otaku* do not learn to be more assertive outside of their peer group.

## Session Two

The objective of Session Two was to take the reflections from the homework, about how the participants have found themselves outcast, and turn that into a moment of empathy. The objective was realized through group activity, Bible study, *anime* viewing, and discussion. Participants were encouraged to help shape the curriculum by giving their

opinion when the questions were too vague, too specific, too personal, or difficult to understand.

### *Chopsticks Activity*

The group activity for the day was learning to use chopsticks. The researcher taught that *otaku* are very proud of their skills in using chopsticks, and that if the participants know how to use them with ease, they gain credibility. Each participant was given an empty bowl, a pair of chopsticks and a pile of uncooked white rice. Each member was instructed on the proper technique of using chopsticks (Daisuke, Ryosuke, and the researcher mentored the other members of the group, taking ten minutes to work and practice).

After instruction, a timer was set for thirty seconds and the members attempted to move the rice from the table into the bowl. This activity was based on a test given in Japan to people seeking work in the technical sector. The test is designed to show manual dexterity, which is a common test for employment. Ryosuke was able to move the most grains of rice to the bowl, and, of those who had never used chopsticks before, Sakura was the best at the activity.

### *Trinity Blood* – “Witch Hunter” (Episode #2)

The episode of *Trinity Blood* called “Witch Hunter” is about a little girl named Elise who possesses a mysterious power. With one touch, she can make a person do her will. Because of this power, everyone has rejected her. The villains of the show, an evil

group of vampires, kidnap Elise in order to use her as a weapon. After being held captive for a short time, she uses her powers on them, and the vampires kill each other.

The protagonist of the story, a Catholic priest named Abel Nightroad, is sent to the scene of the vampire massacre to investigate. He finds Elise and brings her to safety. Elise does everything she can to keep her rescuers away from her, because she believes that no one can be around her without dying. Father Abel tells Elise that she will always have a friend in him. Father Tres, a robot priest, is given the order that if Elise tries to escape, he should kill her rather than allow her to fall into the enemy's hands. When Father Tres attacks Elise, Father Abel steps in and saves her life.

Elise is again kidnapped, this time by a vampire dressed as a nun, and Elise calls out for Father Abel to rescue her. While Father Tres takes care of the vampires, Father Abel confronts their leader, Elise is rescued, and Father Tres disregards his orders and lets her live.

#### *Scripture Jeremiah 30:15-17<sup>5</sup>*

The scripture used for Session Two was the Old Testament passage that made up half of the biblical foundation. As a basis for the project, this scripture proved foundational not only to the researcher, but to set the mood for the participants. The words of Jeremiah state that even though Israel is guilty, God will restore the outcast, setting the tone that no matter why a person is an outcast, God's promise is good.

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<sup>5</sup>"Why do you cry out over your wound, your pain that has no cure? Because of your great guilt and many sins I have done these things to you. 'But all who devour you will be devoured; all your enemies will go into exile. Those who plunder you will be plundered; all who make spoil of you I will despoil. But I will restore you to health and heal your wounds,' declares the LORD, 'because you are called an outcast, Zion for whom no one cares.'"

*Example of Class Discussion Questions*

1. Which priest best represents the church of today with the outsider? Why?
  - a. Father Abel
  - b. Father. Tres
  - c. The Professor

This question provoked the answers of both Father Tres and The Professor in greater number than Father Abel. Father Abel represents unconditional love, Father Tres represents rigid adherence to laws and rules, and The Professor represents having an academic understanding of the situation, but not knowing how to put the understanding into practice. No one answered that all three were possible representations of the church.

2. Read: 1 John 3:2. Elise says, “When people find out about me, bad things happen.” When you find out something bad about a person, does that change your whole outlook on that person?<sup>6</sup>

The participants were asked to discuss the scripture verse in light of the statement of Elise. Participants in general reported that a single incident is unlikely to change their perception of a person, but consistent behavior might. One example that was used that night came from Ryosuke and his wife, Tamama, who had known their best friend, Daisuke, for many years. Very early in their friendship, Daisuke told them that he had been imprisoned, but that one negative thing did not change their outlook on Daisuke as a person.

3. Father Tres does not understand the difference between gaining Elise’s confidence and gaining her knowledge. How do you explain the difference?

Sakura gave an example from her experience: “The first time you go to a new church, you may give them your name, but you don’t always trust them with your address

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<sup>6</sup>“Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”

and phone number. Knowledge is just the facts, but confidence, trust, is about giving/gaining the bigger picture.”

### *Trinity Blood Homework*

For Session Two, context associate Tonia was asked to watch the episode “Witch Hunter” and write a devotional based on the Jeremiah text. Unfortunately, Tonia watched the wrong episode. The devotional she wrote was well done and the researcher wrote three questions for further reflection.

An example of Session Two’s homework comes from Manji and Sakura:

1. Name three “failed projects” or outcasts in the episode “Witch Hunt.” Discuss how each is an outcast and how each is reclaimed into the family of God by the end of the episode.

Manji responded: “Elise is reclaimed by unconditional love of Father Abel. I think reclaiming begins with Tres as he struggles with his humanity and those parts of it that don’t make sense. Abel is still working it out – how to serve in spite of scars.”

2. At one point Elise says she thinks it would be better if she had never been born at all. Is Elise “at fault” for being an outcast?

Manji responded: “No and Yes. Of course, her innocence is emphasized – how she has no choice in her powers or others attempts to use and manipulate her. Yet she also makes choices and not all of them good.”

3. Elise cries out: “If you’re out there somewhere, help me. Father, help me! Save me!” Have you ever called out to your heavenly Father in the same way she called out for Father Abel?

Sakura wrote: “I am not sure that I’ve ever felt so removed from God – in my worst moments though I quietly ‘sink’ into His arms—which kind of says the same—just later in the relationship.”

### Session Three

The objective of Session Three was to learn about sacrificial love and how loving the outcast often causes a Christian witness to lose personal comfort. The objective was realized through group activity, Bible study, *anime* viewing, and discussion. Participants were encouraged to help shape the curriculum by giving their opinion when the questions were too vague, too specific, too personal, or difficult to understand.

*Sudoku* is a traditional Japanese puzzle game. The board is nine squares by nine squares and in each line the numbers 1 through 9 need to be plugged into the squares to make a whole without repeat the numbers horizontally or vertically. At the beginning of the game, the minimum amount of numbers required to solve the puzzle is revealed and the solver must figure out the remaining numbers. *Sudoku* is an analogy for ministry with the outcast. To solve the “puzzle,” a person must spend time investigating the information provided and seek to understand the silences, or blanks, left over. Some solvers choose a process of elimination, others seek to reveal the possible. An example of a *Sudoku* puzzle is below:

	6					1		
		6	5	1				
1	7				6	2		
6	2	3	5		9	4		
	3			2				
4	8	9	7		3	6		
9	6			4		8		
		7	9	4				
5						7		

*Sudoku* is generally misunderstood as a math game because it features numbers, but the puzzle would remain the same if the numbers were replaced by letter or symbol. The group, in general, disliked the *Sudoku* puzzle, because they looked at it as a difficult math problem. *Sudoku* takes time and effort and required them to think deeper. This activity ranked the least favorite in the post-class evaluation.

### *Naruto* – “The Demon in the Snow” (Episode #19)

Naruto and his squad have been hired to protect a bridge while it is being built. Zabuza and Haku have been hired to stop Naruto’s group so that the bridge can be destroyed. As this episode begins, Haku is dead, killed as he sacrificed his life to protect his mentor, Zabuza. Zabuza has been defeated by Naruto’s mentor, Kakashi. Everyone on the bridge is bloodied and broken, and Gato, the man who hired Zabuza and Haku, appears and kicks Haku’s dead body.

Naruto, enraged by this and Zabuza’s lack of reaction, tells Zabuza about Haku’s devotion to his mentor. Zabuza is initially unmoved, but Naruto’s words attack him deeper than Kakashi’s blades. Because of his defeat, Zabuza is fired, and Gato calls for his death. Zabuza is so badly injured that he has lost all use of his arms. With a dagger in his mouth, he fights through Gato’s bodyguards and avenges Haku’s poor treatment.

As he dies, Zabuza asks to be brought to Haku’s side. Zabuza dies finally understanding the sacrifice that Haku made for his sake. Naruto not only teaches an important lesson, but learns one as well.

*Scripture John 15:9-13<sup>7</sup>*

*Naruto* featured many words and concepts that were new to the participants. As long-time members of at least six years at SCUMC, each participant has had, on the other hand, the opportunity to hear this scripture multiple times in Sunday school, worship, Bible studies, or fellowship. As an easily recognizable and understandable verse, John 15:9-13 allowed the participants to engage more fully in the *anime* without the distraction of also delving into a scripture that was less known to them.

*Examples of Class Discussion Questions*

1. Read Matthew 13:14-15<sup>8</sup>. Naruto questions Zabuza, “While he was sacrificing everything for you, you felt nothing for him?” “And if I become stronger, does that mean I’ll become as coldhearted as you are?” Has anyone ever treated you like your sacrifice as if it meant nothing? Have you ever treated someone’s sacrifice as if it meant nothing?

This was the first question that the group had major issues answering because they felt that it was bordering on being too personal. Sakura asked if the researcher could rephrase the question to say: “Do you know anyone who has treated another person’s sacrifice as if it meant nothing.” She insisted that she had lived “a charmed life” and had nothing to add to the discussion. The interesting and revealing part of her suggestion is that when the question was rephrased, Sakura was able to share a touching story about

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<sup>7</sup>“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”

<sup>8</sup>“In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: “you will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.”

her granddaughter and her experiences. Sakura had a disconnect with the boundaries of her personal experience.

2. For whom do you think Naruto is crying?

- a. Himself, because as a Ninja he is considered only a tool as well.<sup>9</sup>
- b. Zabuza, because he doesn't realize what he has lost
- c. Haku, because he was not appreciated by the man he died for and he did not realize his own dream.

After Gato kicks Haku's dead body and Zabuza does nothing, Naruto tells a story of Haku and begins to cry. The participants were asked to imagine for whom Naruto is weeping. Answers varied and for the first time during a multiple choice question, someone said that perhaps it was a combination of all three. Tohru had this revelation and, for most of the evening, she was quiet to the point of only answering when directly questioned.

After class was over, Tohru sent the researcher an email message: "I feel bad about being so quiet in class—I just feel like my head is swirling with too much stuff and none of it is on the same page (or maybe even the same book) as everyone else. I will try to do better when I do the homework. Writing is the only way I can pin down the tornado in my head."<sup>10</sup>

Tohru is a particularly sensitive and introverted woman who feels best in groups when she is a master of her subject. Tohru teaches yoga and is in tune with her mind, body, and spirit. She liked *Naruto*, even though the majority of the participants did not, and so when they complained about the style, characterization, or other aspects, she felt empathy for *Naruto*. She was the first member of the class that the researcher could recognize as being affected by the class and its content.

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<sup>9</sup>*Ninja* is a mercenary who specialized in covert warfare during the same period as the *Samurai*.

<sup>10</sup>Email from Tohru, dated May 15, 2013 at 8:32 pm.

3. Read Proverbs 18:3-5.<sup>11</sup> Zabuza cries and says, “Your words cut deep, deeper than any blade.” Has anyone ever laid bare the truth to you in such a way?

This question was designed to have the participants think about the important people in their spiritual development. Manji talked about his best friend, and how only a person who truly understands you can cut you with words and cut away the bullcrap.

4. Zabuza says, “While he was fighting you, his heart was breaking in two; you see Haku was always too soft and too kind. He felt pain and sorrow and now curse him, I feel them too.” In what way is it feeling other people’s pain a good thing?

If “[e]mpathy is the capacity to accurately understand the position of others,” as J.D. Trout said in his book, *The Empathy Gap*, empathy becomes the key way that participants learned to seek out a connection with *otaku*.<sup>12</sup> *Otaku* in general are not so much interested in how much you know about *anime* as a whole, but how much you care about their fandom and how passionate you are about your own. Being able to empathize with an *otaku* is the first step in restoring the broken relationship.

### *Naruto Homework*

For Session Three's homework, context associate and class participant, Manji, wrote the devotional. The devotional he wrote was well done and the researcher wrote three questions for further reflection. Examples of Session Three's homework include:

1. Jesus said that there are two great commandments: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’ and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” (Luke 10:27). The Ninja also have two commands: “Shinobi are all merely tools in the hands of destiny. There is no point in

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<sup>11</sup>“When wickedness comes, so does contempt, and with shame comes reproach. The words of the mouth are deep waters, but the fountain of wisdom is a rushing stream. It is not good to be partial to the wicked and so deprive the innocent of justice.”

<sup>12</sup>Trout, J.D, *The Empathy Gap: Building Bridges to the Good Life and the Good Society* (New York, NY: Viking, 2009), 21.

wondering if it is right or wrong, it just is.” Compare and contrast those two sets of commandments.

Manji wrote: “Both have a sense of humility and selflessness. Ninjas, however, lack ultimate reason or hope. Jesus’ commandments lead to greater relationship which brings joy, peace & hope. Love in itself is its own reward.”

Emishii wrote: “The ninjas just serve themselves for their own purposes. Christianity is to serve others freely. By helping them (others) Ninjas help themselves.

2. “You were always at my side. The least I can do is to be there beside you at the end. I know it cannot be, but I wish I could go where you have gone. Oh, I wish I could join you there, Haku.” What do you think Zabuza has learned about sacrifice by the end of this episode?

Emishii wrote: “That you should never take a sacrifice for granted.” Manji went much deeper, saying: “First, I think he doesn’t feel worthy of sacrifice. But then he sees how it requires greater strength than his own skill. He also sees the nobleness in it.”

## Session Four

At the halfway point of the intervention, the objective of Session Four was to serve as a warning about being a false prophet. The temptation to tell an *otaku* about Christianity without confronting the parts they find objectionable must dealt with. Also, there is a temptation, in the midst of attending a convention and conversing with *otaku*, even as an *otaku*, to hide one’s own Christianity. The objective was realized through group activity, Bible study, *anime* viewing, and discussion.

### *Activity*

An important activity in the life of some *otaku* is learning Japanese. The Japanese are known for their politeness, and this comes across very well in their language. By

teaching some conversational phrases to the participants, this politeness that *otaku* practice amongst themselves is translated into a common language.

The researcher spoke ten phrases out loud and wrote them on the board and asked the participants repeat them. An example of polite Japanese was the difference in the meaning of the phrases Westerners translate as “thank you.”

### *Samurai Champloo* – “Unholy Orders” (Episode #19)

Fuu hides a girl from thugs and ends up learning that the charm on her *tantō* is a symbol for the underground church in Japan.<sup>13</sup> The charm is a legacy of the girl's father, and may be a clue to his location. The thugs kidnap Fuu and the girl. Jin and Mugen, Fuu's bodyguards, follow.

The next day, Jin and Mugen are walking to Edo when they come across a checkpoint where they must walk over an icon of Jesus Christ in order to proceed. Christianity is illegal in Japan, and those who refuse to walk over the stone are imprisoned for their beliefs. Mugen refuses to step on the stone because he does not want to be ordered around.

Before Mugen and Jin can begin a swordfight to defend their right to pass without the test, a man claiming to be Xavier rides into the middle of the fray, declares himself to be a Christian with guns blazing, and the guards chase him. Xavier is a wanted criminal who defies the law by being a Christian. Jin and Mugen free Fuu and the girl.

Fuu, Mugen, and Jin are invited to spend the night in nearest town by the Christian residents, who give them hospitality despite the risks. Fuu follows the girl to a

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<sup>13</sup>*Samurai* traditional wore two swords, the long sword used for combat was known as a *katana*, while the short sword that resembles a western dagger, was known as a *tantō*. The *tantō*'s most well-known function was as the weapon of disembowelment in Japanese ritual suicide or *seppuku*.

secret church meeting where the two are captured by Xavier's men. Xavier has been running arms and using the church as a cover for his business. Xavier has convinced the secret Christians that the way to heaven is by building guns.

Jin and Mugen rescue Fuu and the girl and expose Xavier as a fake. The church denounces Xavier, and when he tries to shoot the girl, his weapon backfires, killing him. The girl gives Fuu further guidance to find her father, and the three continue on their journey.

#### *Scripture*

The rationale behind using Matthew 7:15-20 in this section is because it addresses the theme of false prophets and meets the needs of the objective of the session.<sup>14</sup> It is a familiar biblical passage and was well received by the participants.

#### *Example Discussion Questions*

1. “If someone is opposed to my work, they are also opposed to God. The punishment is Death.” Where else do you find this sentiment in today’s society?

The conversation turned to news that Westboro Baptist Church had announced that they would be protesting the high school graduation for Lakeland High School and its adjacent art school, Harrison School for the Performing Arts, because they had an openly gay teacher. The participants talked about how, even though no one was under

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<sup>14</sup>“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.”

threat of actual death, spiritual death and Westboro's constant threat of eternal damnation are a good analogy.

2. Read Matthew 5:38-40: "Isn't it in moments like these that you're supposed to turn the other cheek?" How do you interpret that scripture?

Each participant went around the room, giving wonderful examples. Eventually after everyone had shared, Ryosuke brought up the fact that SCUMC had experienced pastoral issues both in the past, with the church's founding pastor, and more recently, with the second pastor, where the members were expected to continually forgive slights, imagined or very real. The discussion became animated, with the participants taking time to grieve and express their pain in ways that correlate well with how they may be called to listen to the grief and complaints of *otaku* in the future.

3. "The bigger the spectacle we make, the more new believers we create." Why does the spectacle appeal to the unchurched?

The discussion turned toward the new pastor, who has set a vision for the church in which the members should pray that five hundred people will be in attendance at the services of Easter 2014. To that end, the pastor started a separate children's worship service to run concurrent to the main worship service and hired new personnel, including a Youth Ministry Coordinator, Children's Ministry Coordinator, and Worship Leader. The changes were controversial among the participants in the class, and the class gave them a safe forum to talk about their feelings.

### *Samurai Champloo Homework*

For Session Four, professional associate Dr. Glenda Kaminski wrote a devotional, and the researcher wrote three questions for further reflection. An example of this Session's homework includes:

1. If you have imposters sharing your life with you, what can you do to find the Truth?

Manji wrote: "I think I can recognize when they are telling me what I want to hear versus speaking their mind. I do have people who will enable my bad behaviors, but the people I allow to be closest to me are always there, ready to tell the truth."

2. Identify the things or events in your life that keep you from being focused toward God and the Truth. What action steps can you take to reorder your priorities or get back?

Manji wrote: "I have tons of stuff in my life that distracts me from God's truth: work, kids, voices telling me what should be my priorities. It seems I can't get too far off-target before nagging voices in my heart and in my ear call me back."

Tohru wrote:

Confusion & cluelessness, if anything, keep me from the Truth. The only thing I know to do right now, is practice what I know is right & am capable of doing. What I don't know & what I can't do – I am trying to learn not to dwell on these things. My "action step" is centering prayer, which I have defined as "practicing being present in the Presence."

## Session Five

The objective of Session Five was to prepare the participants to meet *otaku*, either at a convention or at The TBD Anime Club. In preparation, the participants needed to be aware that *otaku* will show their ugliest side and dare someone to love them. Some will also show their ugliest side and dare others to hate them, but both respond to the love or hate they are shown.

### *Activity*

For the fifth session's activity, the research choose to do a word search of terms that had been used in the previous four sessions, so as to review and reinforce the teaching.

### *Fruits Basket – “Let’s Go Home” (Episode #26)*

Kyo is under the Sohma family curse, and as such, he turns into an animal whenever a member of the opposite sex hugs him. Like the other members of his family, he is denied any chance of love. Kyo, however, has a second curse that is unshared with the rest of his family. When the beaded bracelet around his wrist comes off, he is turned into a grotesque cat-like monster.

In an attempt to break the family’s curse, Kazuma, Kyo’s adopted father, removed the bracelet and revealed Kyo’s true form to Tohru, the girl he has fallen in love with over the course of the season. Tohru is initially repulsed, but after realizing that Kyo’s true form alienates him from the rest of the world in the same way her past has alienated her, she runs after him into the forest.

Kyo lashes out at Tohru, injuring her, but Kyo’s cousin, Yuki, rushes in and holds him down while shouting at Tohru to tell Kyo the truth of her feelings. Tohru admits that his physical forms makes her afraid, but that all she really wants is for them to go home and go on living a happy life. Kyo is calmed by her words and regains his human form, breaking one part of the curse. Kyo tells her that no one, not even his mother, was able to admit they feared his true form. Tohru hugs Kyo and he transforms into his cute cat form

and she takes him and Yuki, now in his cute rat form, home. The hug proves that the family's curse has not been broken.

Kazuma and Shigure, the boys' uncles, are relieved that, even though the curse isn't broken, they have done no harm to Kyo and Tohru's budding romance. Each of the family members are shown going on with life. Yuki finally admits that he is jealous of Kyo. Kyo admits that he has always been jealous of Yuki

Tohru asks Shigure for permission to meet with Akito, the head of the family. Shigure tries to talk her out of it, but she is steadfast in her determination. Akito is feared by all the members of the Sohma family. He is not cursed in the same way as the others, but he is cursed to die young, and this has colored all interactions between him and his family. He is a beautiful, but dangerous and ill-tempered young man.

Tohru is accompanied to the meeting by Shigure, Yuki, and the family doctor, Hatori. Akito questions Tohru and when he does not get the answers he wants, he attacks her, grabbing her by the hair and shaking her. Yuki and Shigure each manage to grab one of Akito's arm— the first time either of the two defy him – but he still has a hold of her hair.

Tohru is finally able to admit that the reason she wanted to meet Akito was to become his friend, and help him live out his short lifespan knowing that he is alive and loved. Akito releases her. He is confused by what has happened, but there is hope that he will allow others close to him for the first time.

### *Scripture*

To meet the objective of Session Five, the researcher choose Luke 6:31-36.<sup>15</sup>

The important message in the text is loving those who do not first love you. At the beginning of the *anime*, Kyo hates Tohru and thinks she is stupid, but comes to love her because of her great love toward him. At the conclusion of the show, it is Tohru's love of Kyo and then Akito that restores the family.

### *Example of Discussion Questions*

1. Read John 15:13.<sup>16</sup> Tohru is afraid of facing what Kyo has become. But she walks through the dark, rainy forest all night to find him. When he tries to run away again, Yuki holds him down and encourages her to confront him. Do you have a Yuki in your life that helps you confront the demons in your life?

Manji shared about his best friend and the ways in which the man has kept him in line and brought him back into line over many things in their twenty year accountability relationship. The group then talked about accountability partners and encouraged each other to find someone to hold them accountable.

2. Kyo intentionally hurts everyone around him because he is haunted by the unintentional harm his mother did to him. Do you have a Kyo in your life that tries to push you away?

Tohru, the participant, shared a story about her daughter and how she has dealt with behavior meant to push her away for decades.

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<sup>15</sup>“Do to others as you would have them do to you. “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”

<sup>16</sup>“Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”

The researcher shared a story about Jei, a young man with whom she did ministry for years, who would alternately pull closer and then push away.<sup>17</sup> If Jei was feeling vulnerable, he was always sure to attack a person's weak points, even if they were trying to help him.

3. "How is it that you could give me the words I needed to hear the most right now? How is it that somebody like you could be here by my side, calling my name?" Have you been Tohru to someone else's Kyo?

Daisuke talked about a man named Ken, whom he met in prison, who told him every day, "Jesus loves you and so do I." Daisuke credited Ken with being there in his life right when he needed to hear that message the most.

### *Fruits Basket* Homework

For Session Five, contextual associate Tohru wrote a devotional and the researcher wrote three questions for further reflection. An example of this session's homework includes:

1. Tohru's gift is listening to what people mean, not what they say. She understands the core of Akito's pain in the same way she understands Kyo's pain. Do you have a Tohru in your life? Discuss.

Manji wrote: "I think I do, or at least have had those people in my life. I think it takes natural empathy and a giftedness for being intuitive. I also think it requires someone who will listen without an agenda, an unselfish ear."

Tohru (the participant, not the character) wrote: "Yes, I have found friends who have had similar experiences as mine, and react to those experiences in similar ways. These friends understand why I am the way I am, and accept me the way I am."

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<sup>17</sup>Jei was first mentioned in Chapter One.

Sakura said: ‘Different people are the ‘listeners’ to various parts of my life—but it is difficult to really find someone who is attuned to you. Knowing that God/Jesus is fully aware of what’s going on inside is a blessing.’

## 2. What does the final conversation between Hatori and Shigure mean to your life?

Sakura wrote: “Have hope for the future! In our life, the future hope helps us deal with the now!”

Manji wrote: “They are gently guiding the group in their journey, not in control of what may come. In our spiritual journey, we constantly are without control over what comes next, but there is always hope. We need to move slowly, being attentive to God and His spirit.”

Tohru wrote: “No matter how clueless I think I am, that’s not the end of my story. Everything will be ok in the end. If it’s not ok, it’s not the end.”

## Session Six

*Trigun* was not part of the original intervention plan. The researcher was having dinner with the participants before class one night and said if she ever did this class again at SCUMC, she would plan for an extra week and add *Trigun* to the mix. Before having a moment to explain her motives, Manji and Emishii both said they would be willing to extend their participation by an extra week if she thought the class would be meaningful. Manji paid her a further compliment and said this was the best church class he had ever taken and he did not want it to end.

The reason this was not included in the original plan is that the researcher believed there would be a time constraint of six weeks, the normal cycle of classes on Wednesday nights for adult education. As she was using this format as part of the

intervention, she believed that six weeks of instruction, with a final meeting outside of normal hours to do the evaluation would be the limit. However, with the enthusiastic response from two participants, she polled the remaining four and they also greeted the idea with excitement.

The objective of showing this particular *anime* was to show the participants that doubts are a natural part of ministry, and that sometimes people only find themselves when in extreme circumstances.

### *Activity*

There was no planned activity this week. The class instead talked about the invitation to join The TBD Anime Club for a screening of *Trigun* on the following Friday night. The viewing schedule of the TBD Anime Club was altered to show *Trigun* that month, so that the participants of the intervention would be familiar with what they were watching and could talk about it with the members of the club.

### *Trigun Summary – “Paradise” (Episode 23)*

In the series, Nicholas D. Wolfwood is a priest who becomes a bounty hunter in order to protect the orphans in his care. He is tasked with protecting the series lead, Vash the Stampede, until the series villain, Knives Millions, Vash’s brother, can catch up and kill him.

This episode follows an incident where Wolfwood kills a child in order to protect Vash and shows the reaction of the four principal characters to the shooting. Wolfwood turns inward, reviewing his life from early abuse at his father’s hands, to his becoming a

priest, to his assignment with Vash, and the bonds of friendship he has formed with Vash and their two female companions.

Vash is angry at Wolfwood and tries to convince his friend that there is always another way. Vash and Wolfwood are targeted by assassins, and the two part, each going after one of the assassins. Vash drives out of town and confronts a sniper. The sniper takes his own life and Vash is devastated to learn that there is not always another way.

Wolfwood is confronted with his mentor, Chapel the Evergreen, who taught him to be a bounty hunter. The two fight, and Wolfwood decides to give Vash's philosophy a try; he lets Chapel live. As he walks away, Chapel shoots Wolfwood.

Injured, Wolfwood finds Vash, who is in doubt about his choices. Vash, in his introspection, doesn't notice that Wolfwood is bleeding. Wolfwood comforts him, saying that everyone makes mistakes, but that is no reason to despair. Wolfwood leaves and enters the town's church.

Falling to his knees, he asks God for forgiveness and confesses his sins, something he has never done before, despite being a priest and hearing other people's confessions. Wolfwood dies in the church, and his companions mourn his passing.

#### *Example Discussion Questions*

1. Wolfwood begins to voice his doubts. "It's so strange. Where did I go wrong? I've always chosen the right path, haven't I?" What do you do when you have doubts?

For the last two classes, Manji's mother, Dola and the eldest member of SCUMC, Riza, joined the participants. Dola and Riza were both over sixty-five and had joined the class by invitation of Manji and Sakura, respectively. They brought great insight to this

question. Over their long lives they had experienced joys and tragedy, and had personal experience dealing with doubts. It was serendipitous that they chose to come to this class.

2. When Vash is mourning his inability to save Caine, Wolfwood says, "Man is born a mortal being and we all make mistakes. It's a part of the game, just be more careful next time." What is he really talking about?
  - a. His mistake in killing the child.
  - b. Vash's inability to save Caine.
  - c. His choice to spare Chapel and the wounds he has received.

The participants believed that all of the above were appropriate and each was discussed in turn.

3. Read Romans 5:2b-4.<sup>18</sup> "It's hard for me to accept making mistakes like that," Vash says about Caine's death. Wolfwood responds "Then you can choose to suffer. That's also part of the human experience." Does choosing to suffer make Vash stronger in his convictions?

#### *Trigun Homework*

No devotional was done for this week, but homework questions were given. Some examples of the responses were:

1. In the episode Wolfwood says, "I hope you don't mind me barging in like this. In spite of the profession I've chosen, I've never actually made a confession before." Is it possible for one of God's children to barge into God's presence?

Sakura wrote: "No, God wants to hear from us whenever we take the time to talk to Him/with Him."

2. Think about a time that you justified your actions. What kind of excuses have you made for your sins? How did you make atonement for those actions? Were you at peace afterwards?

Sakura wrote: "Not enough time, didn't know them well enough, made a special effort to make up for the wrong actions, usually at peace afterwards."

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<sup>18</sup>"And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope."

### 3. Is Wolfwood ready for forgiveness?

Sakura wrote: "Finally! He is ready to accept!"

## Session Seven

This episode was purposefully put at the end of the intervention. *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex: 2<sup>nd</sup> Gig* (usually shortened to *GITS:SAC 2<sup>nd</sup> Gig*) is stylistically very different from the previous *anime* shown and aimed at a cerebral audience. While not as overtly Christian as *Trinity Blood*, *Samurai Champloo*, or *Trigun*, *GITS:SAC 2<sup>nd</sup> Gig* has what the researcher considers to be the most important lesson to teach in preparing participants for ministry with the outsider.

### *Activity*

For the final session of the intervention, the class repeated the origami crane experiment. As a group, the participants were vastly improved over their first attempt. The total amount of time taken to complete the project decreased, from forty-five minutes to fifteen minutes. Each of the participants, with the exception of Manji who was late for the first class, completed a crane, and while they followed the basic instructions from the researcher, they helped each other instead of relying on her. The two guests to the class were likewise helped, and everyone made a proper crane before the end of those fifteen minutes.

The motif of the episode of *GITS:SAC 2<sup>nd</sup> Gig* was the folding of origami cranes, and after completing their cranes the class watched the characters make them as well, giving them a new insight into the difficulty the characters had to overcome. During

previous sessions, the participants began to understand the nature of *otaku* and the activities that were important to that subgroup.

*Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex: 2<sup>nd</sup> Gig – “Kusanagi’s Labyrnith – AFFECTION” (Episode #11)*

The Major is a cyborg who runs a security force of the Japanese government. She is participating in a training exercise with new recruits when she encounters a glitch and finds a store that specializes in storing external memories.

She is drawn to an antique car containing two abandoned children’s prosthetic bodies, one of which looks very much like her. The store is about to close, but the owner invites her to return tomorrow to hear their story.

She returns the next day and learns that the children were the only survivors of a plane accident. The girl is in a coma. The boy is paralyzed except for his left hand. The boy starts to think of the unconscious girl as a friend, and begins to fold origami cranes for her. In Japan, tradition says that a person who folds one thousand origami cranes can make a wish and it will be granted.

The girl’s condition worsens and she is rushed into surgery. When she does not return, the nurses tell him that she went far away. He thinks that she has died, but continues to fold the cranes for her because he does not know what else to do.

The boy’s family and his doctors propose to replace the boy’s body with a prosthetic body. He does not answer them, so they bring a little girl who has had the procedure to meet him.

He asks the girl if she can fold origami cranes with her prosthetic hands. She tries, but fails, as she is too new to her body to make it do the delicate work. He turns down the

procedure, but she swears that she will return to him once she has learned to fold the cranes so that she can make them for him this time.

The boy realizes that she was the little girl who survived with him. He changes his mind and has the surgery. The owner tells the Major that the boy tried to track the girl down, but he became a solider along the way, and by the time he found the empty prosthetic body, she had swapped into a more age-appropriate body. The Major and the owner talk longer and it is revealed that she was the little girl, and he was the first boy she ever loved.

### *Scripture*

As foundational scriptures of the project, 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 1:3-7 and its counterpart, Jeremiah 30:15-17 were the bookends of the intervention. Paul's words instruct Christians that a Christian's natural sufferings can be re-purposed to the benefit of others, and by doing so, provide a unique comfort. This episode of *GITS:SAC 2<sup>nd</sup> Gig* perfectly illustrates this concept.

### *Examples of Discussion Questions*

1. “This little girl tried again and again to fold the paper crane. I think due to her persistence in this endeavor, she was a source of hope for the boy.” In what ways can your persistence be a source of hope for others?
2. In what ways is evangelism like folding an origami crane over and over again for the little boy who can't move forward?

3. Read 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthian 1:3-7. “When he thought of how that little girl had endured the same suffering, he was able to overcome his own discomfort with the transition.”

Does the suffering of other people help us with our own suffering?

*Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex: 2<sup>nd</sup> Gig – Homework*

Context associate and intervention participant Daisuke wrote a devotional based on the episode. Daisuke is also a member of The TBD Anime Club, and has attended numerous *anime* conventions in the state of Florida. The *Ghost in the Shell* collection is Daisuke’s favorite *anime*, and he was asked to write the final devotional based on this information.<sup>19</sup>

1. How often have our own circumstances brought us to a place where we didn't want to see any benefit from starting anew, even though we had nothing to lose by trying?

Tohru said: “Not often for me—I am almost always ready to try something new.”

2. How can we use our experiences to encourage others to take a chance on something new?

Tohru said: “We can tell our story, how we tried the new thing, and were not sorry.

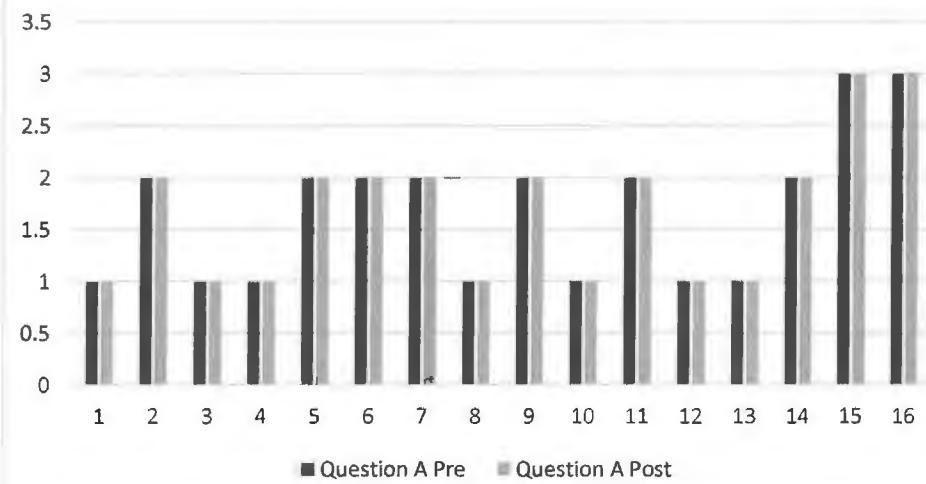
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<sup>19</sup>*Ghost in the Shell* collection includes three feature movie length films, two seasons of *anime* episodes in the television format and an OVA (or miniseries). *Ghost in the Shell* is based on a *Manga* of the same name.

### Post-Test

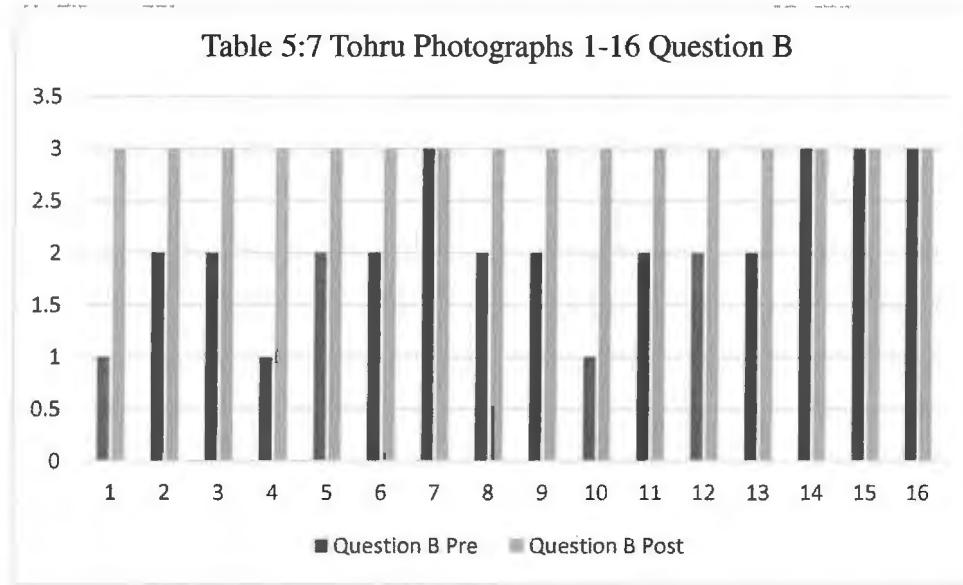
*Tohru*

**Table 5:6 Tohru Photographs 1-16 Question A**



Prior to the intervention, Tohru was well known to the researcher. Tohru had participated in a number of classes with Tracy, including *The Gospel According to the Simpsons* class based on the book series by Mark Pinsky. Tohru, a fifty-nine year-old woman, and a yoga instructor is a diligent student, always prepared and on time.

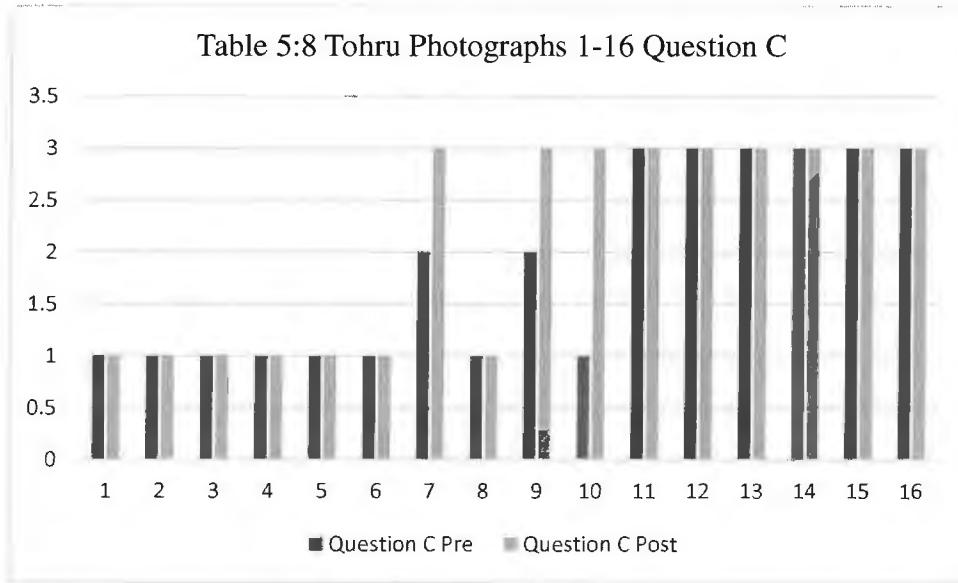
For Question A, “I would feel comfortable speaking to this person in public,” Tohru’s answers did not change from pre-test to post-test, suggesting she has a fairly high comfort level speaking to strangers in a public setting. As a yoga instructor, this is not surprising.



Question B, "I would feel comfortable inviting this person to my church," Tohru's discomfort level was raised in almost all cases, with the exception of Photographs 14-16 which were already at neutral. She never reached the maximum level of discomfort and her answers suggest that she had a hidden bias when the pre-test was taken.

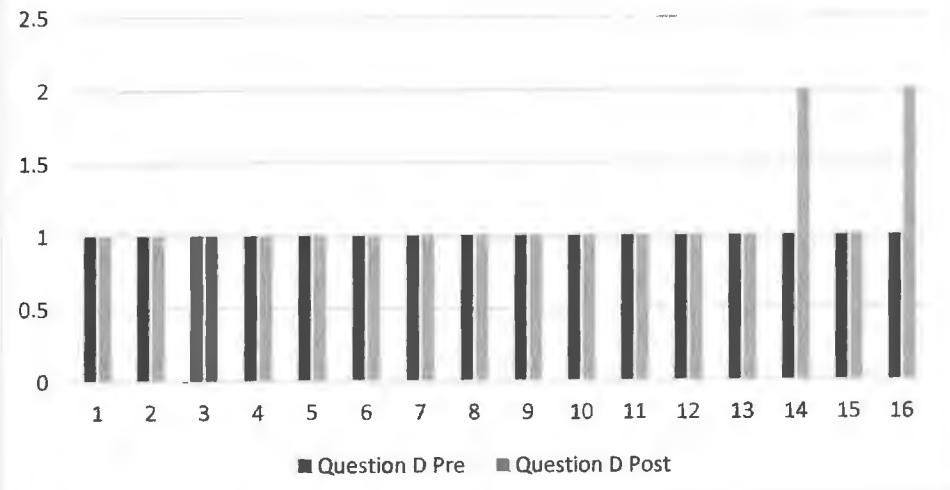
Question B, "I would feel comfortable inviting this person to my church," Tohru's discomfort level was raised in almost all cases, with the exception of Photographs 14-16 which were already at neutral. She never reached the maximum level of discomfort, and her answers suggest that she had a hidden bias when the pre-test was taken.

As a mature Christian, she may have expected that she should feel comfortable with normal looking people. After the class, her bias was exposed to a more reasonable level of neutrality. It is very possible that Tohru would feel uncomfortable inviting anyone to church in any situation. Photographs 14-16 are fully costumed characters and, without being able to see the people fully, a reasonable amount of discomfort is understandable.



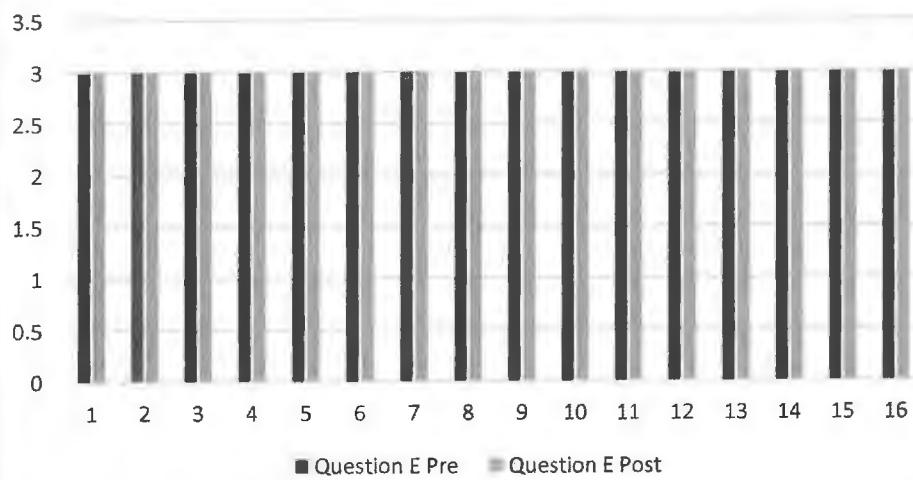
For Question C, “This person would feel welcome at my church,” Tohru was consistent in pre and post-tests for Photographs 1-6, 8, 11-16, showing no improvement but at the same time no regression in comfort levels. Photographs 7, 9, and 10 show an overall large rise in discomfort from early acceptance. Tohru encountered the subject of Photograph 7 at a meeting of The TBD Anime Club and her opinion of him was undoubtedly colored by this interaction. Photograph 8 is the first time a person is shown in a partial costume, suggesting that Tohru has become more neutral to people wearing costumes.

Table 5:9 Tohru Photographs 1-16 Question D



For Question D, “I would feel comfortable sitting next to this person in church,” Tohru was consistent in pre and post-tests for all photographs, except for numbers 14 and 16. Both photographs had the face of the subject obscure.

Table 5:10 Tohru Photographs 1-16 Question E

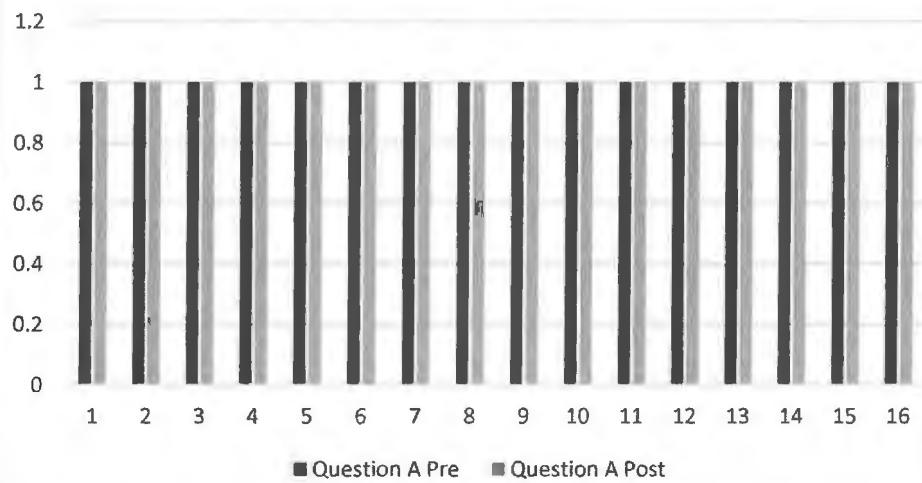


Tohru responded as expected for Question E, “This person is a Christian,” with a completely neutral response. Tohru proved an understanding that a person cannot be qualified as a Christian by appearances alone.

### *Ryosuke*

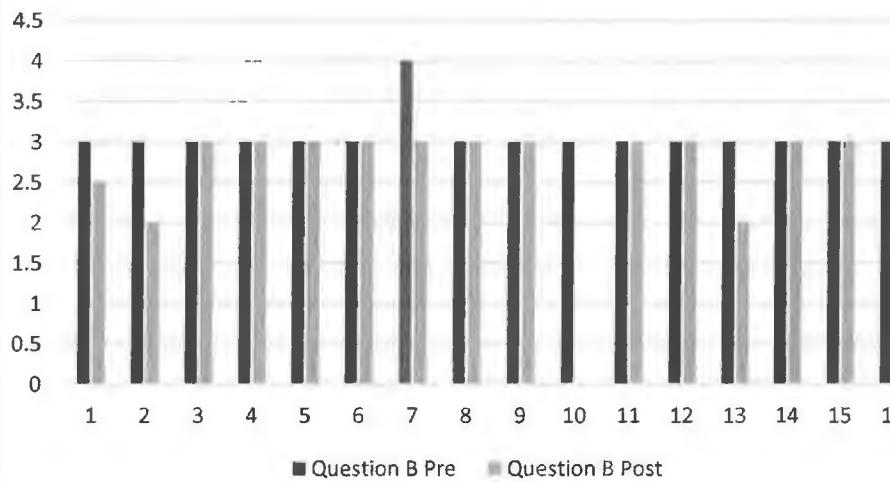
Ryosuke is a thirty-nine year-old graphic artist who participated in the class in anticipation for joining the convention circuit as a vendor. Ryosuke was well-known to the participant prior to the class, having gone to college with the researcher.

Table 5:11 Ryosuke Photographs 1-16 Question A



Ryosuke consistently answered that he would feel comfortable speaking to all the subjects in person. Ryosuke, though an introvert, has been associated with outcasts, by choice, since middle school and his answers suggest this association continues. Ryosuke, it should be noted, knew the subject of Photographs 5 and 13, who are the same person.

Table 5:12 Ryosuke Photographs 1-16 Question B

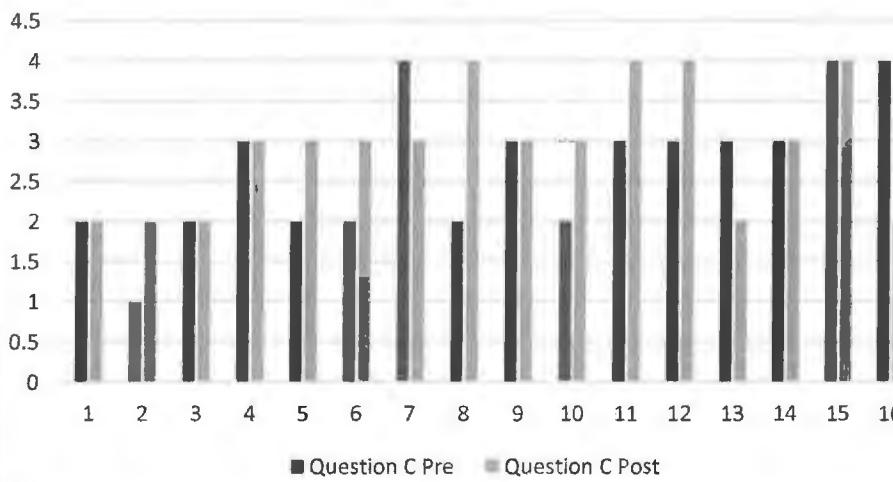


Ryosuke showed improvement in comfort levels in Photographs 1, 2, 7 and 13.

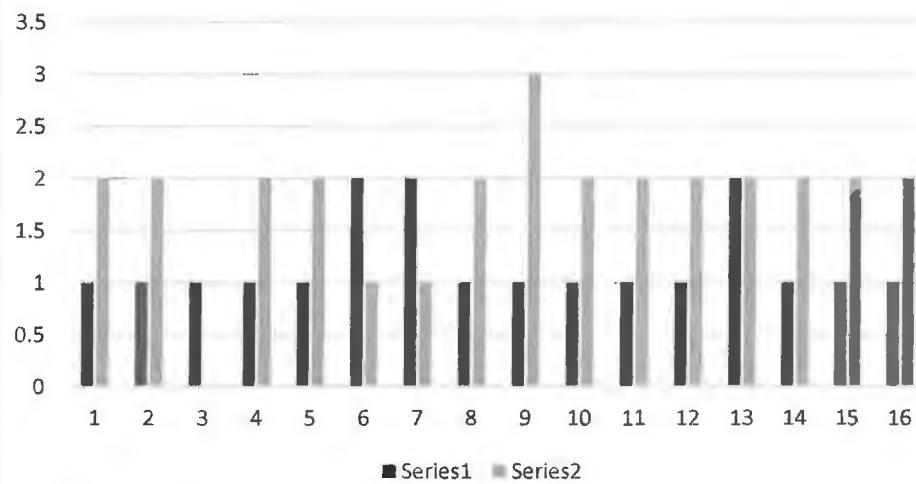
After the pre-test, Ryosuke met subjects 1 and 2 at an *anime* convention and he found out that his wife taught subject 7 in her second grade class for a local Catholic school.

Improvement in comfort levels, therefore can be inferred to improve with exposure.

Table 5:13 Ryosuke Photographs 1-16 Questions C



Ryosuke showed improvement in comfort levels with Photographs 7 and 16. The change from the pre- to post-test in subjects 8 and 16 was the largest, increasing by two points. He showed an increase in discomfort in Photographs 2, 5, 6, 8, and 10-12.

**Table 5:14 Ryosuke Photographs 1-16 Questions D**

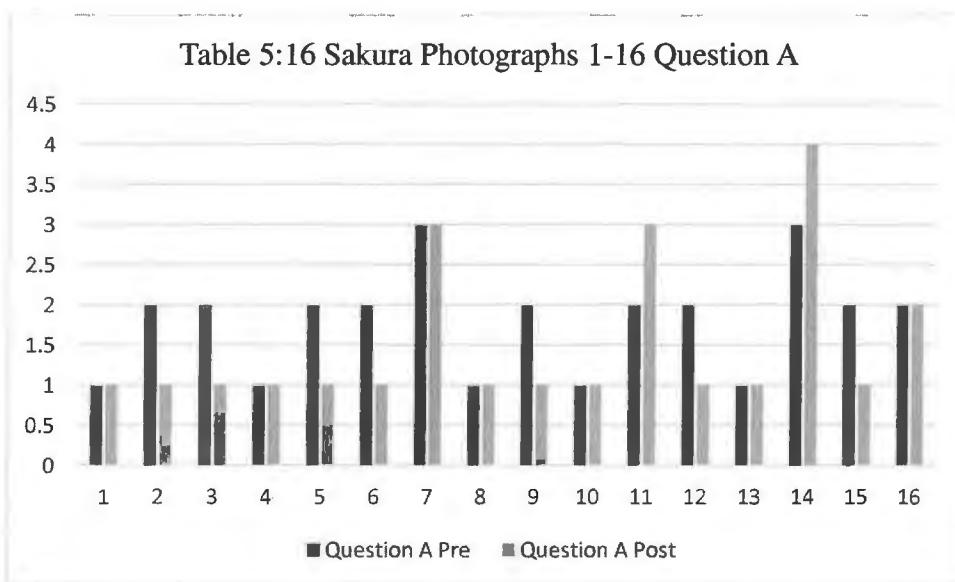
Ryosuke showed an increase in discomfort with all photographs, but his numbers do not increase above neutral. His largest change came in subject 9, the only African-American/Black person included in the PowerPoint®. A single point of information, however, does not provide enough information to make an inference on the data. Of all the other photographs, the increase was a single point difference. Ryosuke failed to answer question D for Photograph 3 of the post-test.

**Table 5:15 Ryosuke Photographs 1-16 Questions E**

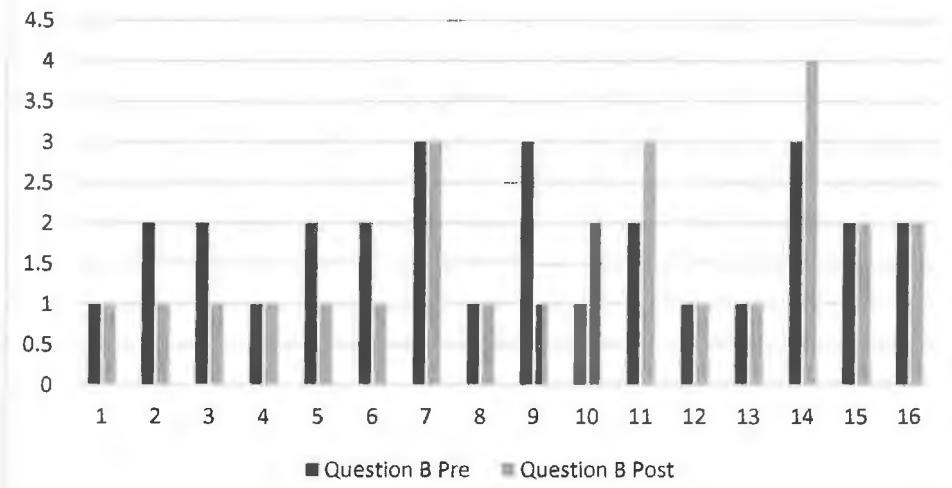
Ryosuke consistently rated the subjects of the photographs as neutral, with two exceptions, Photographs 1 and 13. Subject 13, and subject 5 are the same person and Ryosuke knows this person outside of the intervention. The fact that his answers differ between the two photographs is remarkable, but no inference can be made.

### *Sakura*

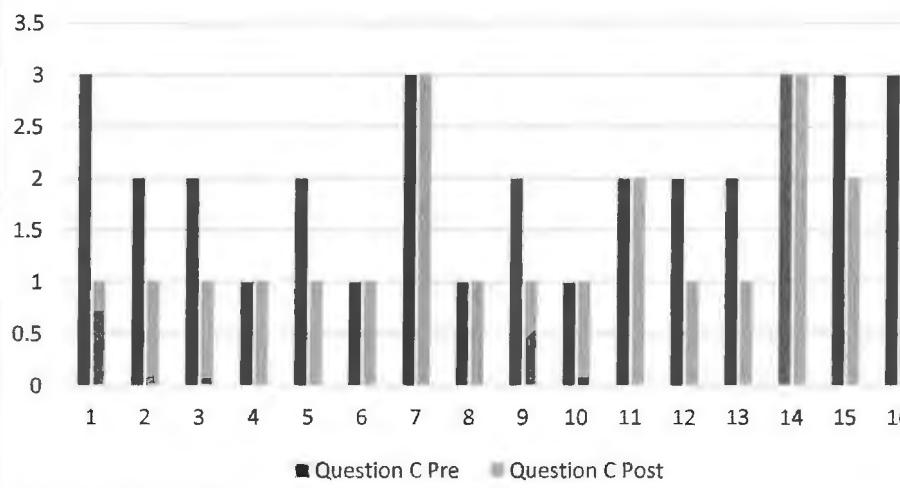
Sakura is a seventy year-old woman who was not well known before the class. The only experience the researcher had with her was through church council meetings. Sakura attended the class because her granddaughter attends conventions. Sakura helped her granddaughter make costumes for the events, and became curious about the suitability of the material.



Sakura showed a vast improvement in her level of comfort, with over half of her answers improving at least one point. Only two photographs had a regression in comfort, Photographs 11 and 14. There is no indication as to why she was less comfortable with these two subjects.

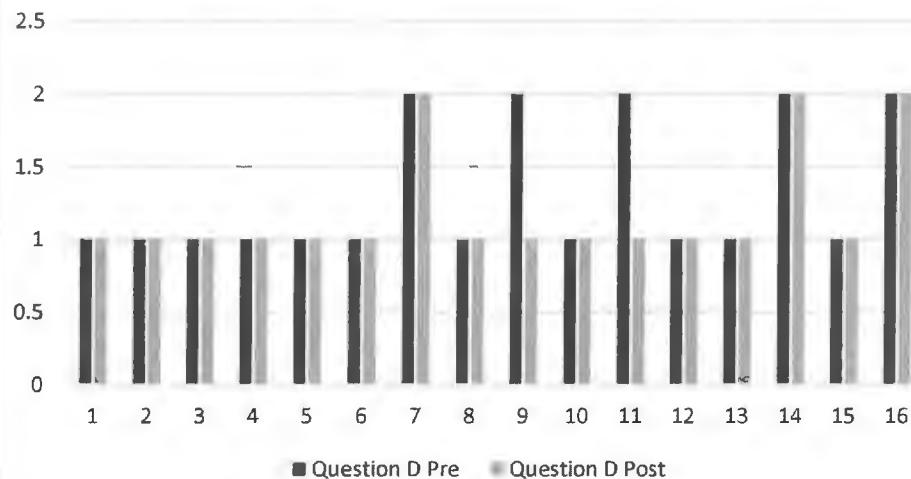
**Table 5:17 Sakura Photographs 1-16 Question B**

The majority of Sakura's answers reflected no changes in comfort; five answers increased in comfort and three showed a decrease in comfort. The researcher finds it remarkable that subject 14, whose face is partially obscured, rated less comfortable than subjects 15 and 16, who are more obviously costumes.

**Table 5:18 Sakura Photographs 1-16 Questions C**

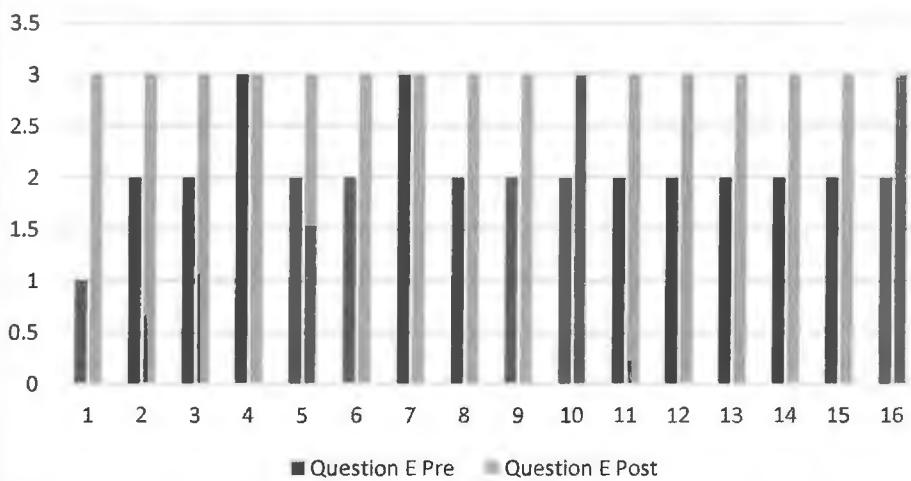
Sakura showed marked improvement in comfort level from the pre- to post-test, and those that showed no improvement, also showed no regression.

Table 5:19 Sakura Photographs 1-16 Question D



Sakura showed marked improvement in comfort level from the pre- to post-test, and those that showed no improvement, also showed no regression.

Table 5:20 Sakura Photographs 1-16 Question E



### *Emishii*

Emishii is a forty-two year-old male nurse and a member of The TBD Anime Club. Emishii is married to the woman whose survey was removed from the parent survey. Emishii's results were likewise discarded from consideration, because after the

post-test he confided in the researcher that he answered the questions in order to make her research look better. His dishonesty is interesting, as he was trying to be helpful to the researcher, but his answers are not truthful. His participation in the homework and during class activities and discussion, however were so useful that he was not thrown out of the study completely. Tables 5:22 and 5:23 show the way in which he attempted to be helpful.

Table 5:21 Emishii Photographs 1-16 Questions A-D

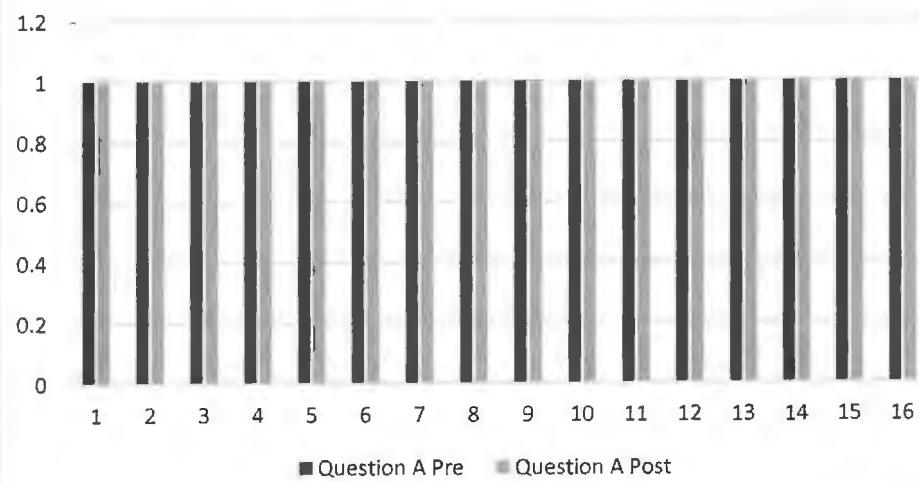
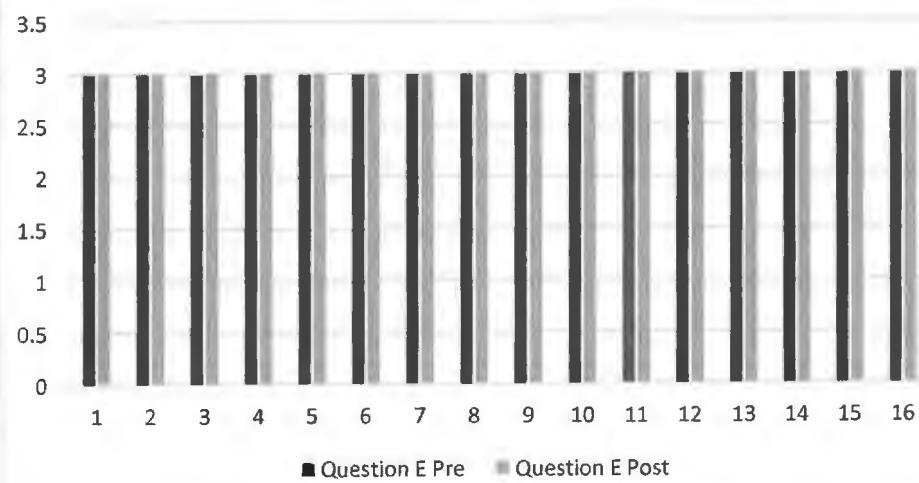


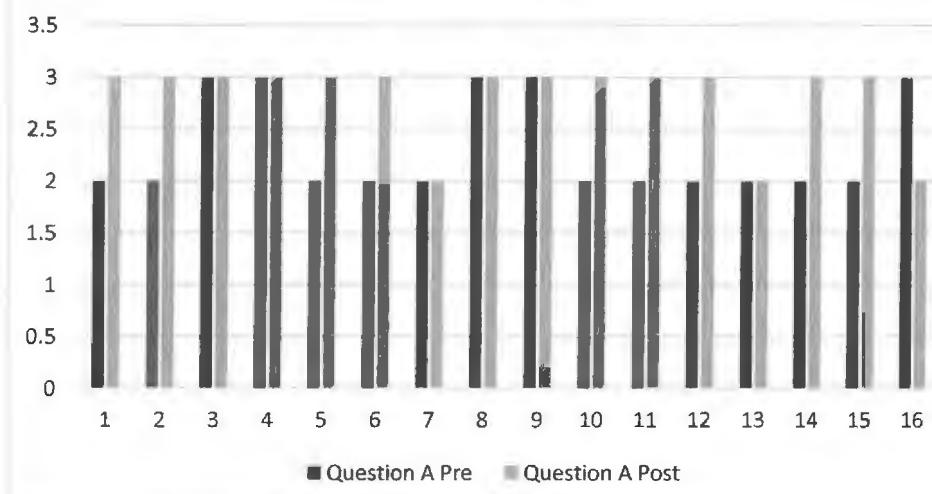
Table 5:22 Emishii Photographs 1-16 Question E



### Daisuke

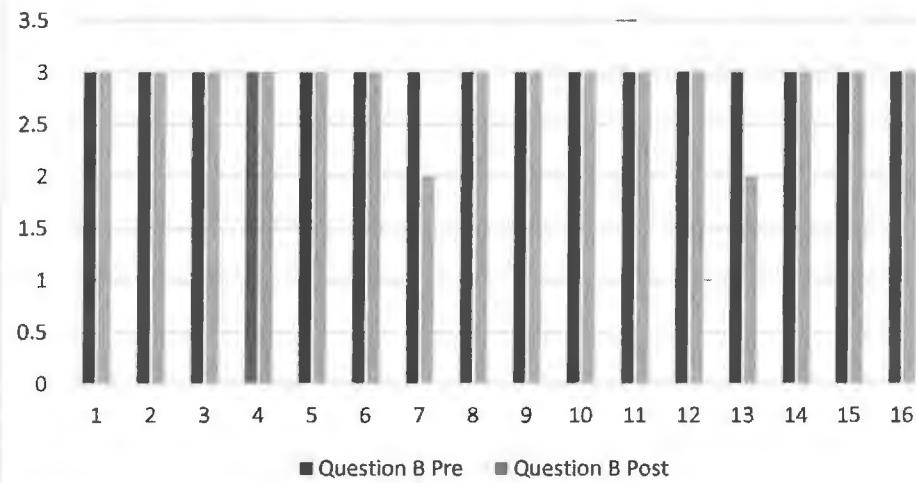
Daisuke is a forty-nine year-old man and the assistant technical director of a local civic center. Daisuke is a family member of the researcher, member of The TBD Anime Club, and a convention attendee. He knows personally the subjects of Photographs 2, 5 and 13, 7 and 15.

Table 5:23 Daisuke Photographs 1-16 Question A



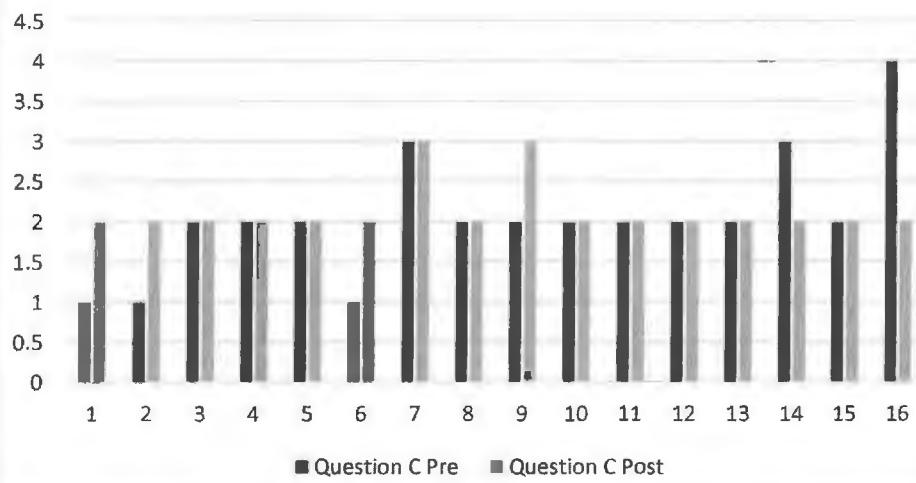
Daisuke's increase in discomfort suggests that he began to think critically of *anime* fans instead of simply accepting them at face value. While not the intended results, any improvement in critical thinking opens up further discussion.

Table 5:24 Daisuke Photographs 1-16 Question B



Daisuke admits that when he took the pre-test, he looked at all the individuals as if they were unknown to him, but in the post-test, allowed his personal feelings of his friends or acquaintances to change his opinions.

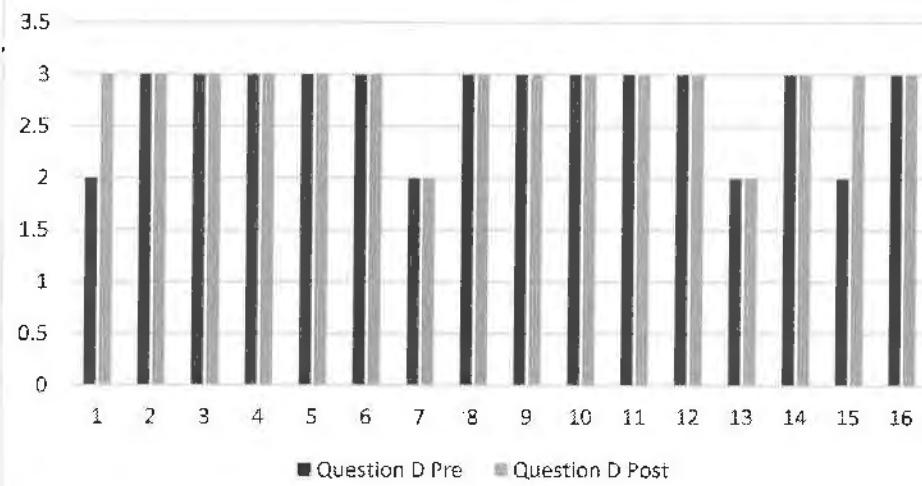
Table 5:25 Daisuke Photographs 1-16 Question C



The majority of Daisuke's answers reflect his comfort, but a slight change of less comfortable is perhaps a result of critical thinking. His vast increase in comfort shown in Photograph 16 is most likely the result of Daisuke cosplaying a character whose face is covered during the intervention period. This was the first time he attempted such a

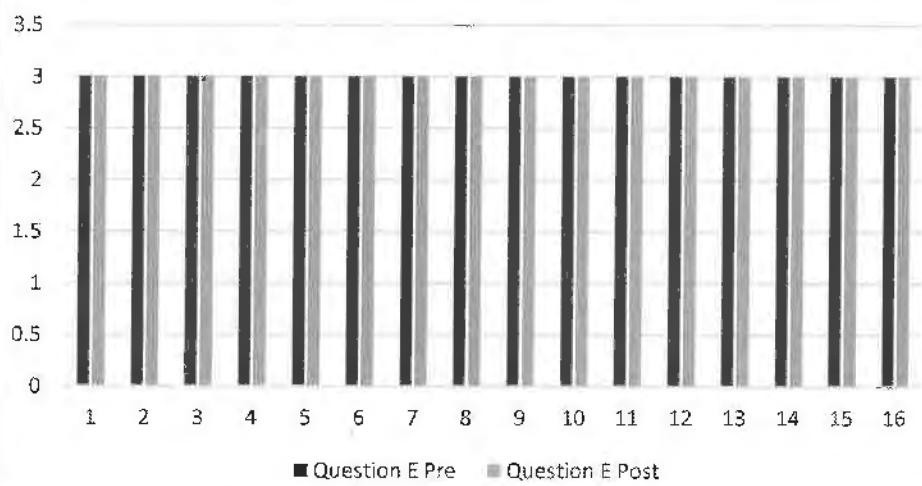
costume and he had a positive experience. This suggests that Daisuke's empathy with subject 16 has increased.

Table 5:26 Daisuke Photographs 1-16 Question D



Daisuke exhibits consistency in his answers, the intervention having little to no marked effect on his opinions.

Table 5:27 Daisuke Photographs 1-16 Question E



### *Manji*

Manji is a forty-four year-old attorney. He is a founding member of SCUMC. He joined the class because his elementary-aged children are interested in the *anime* that is broadcast during the afterschool and Saturday programming blocks on basic cable and network television. This is the first time Manji was in a class led by the researcher, but the researcher has taken classes led by Manji in the past.

Table 5:28 Manji Photographs 1-16 Question A

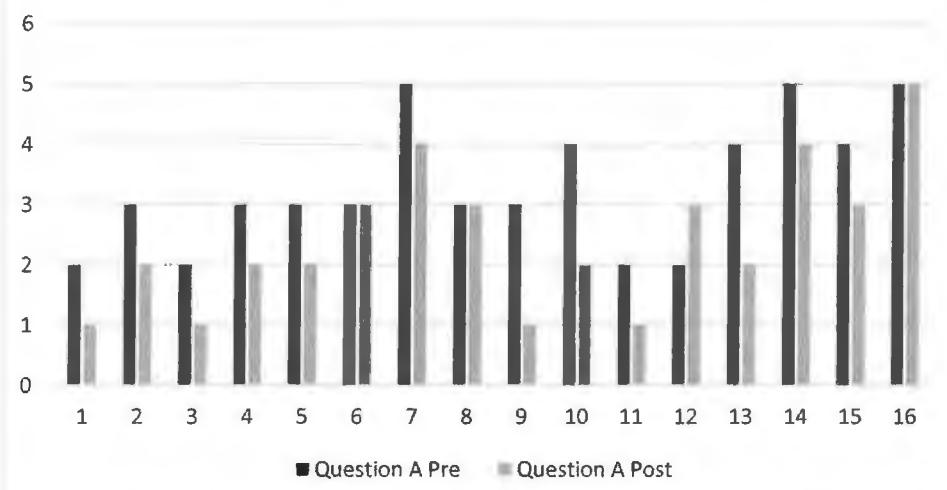
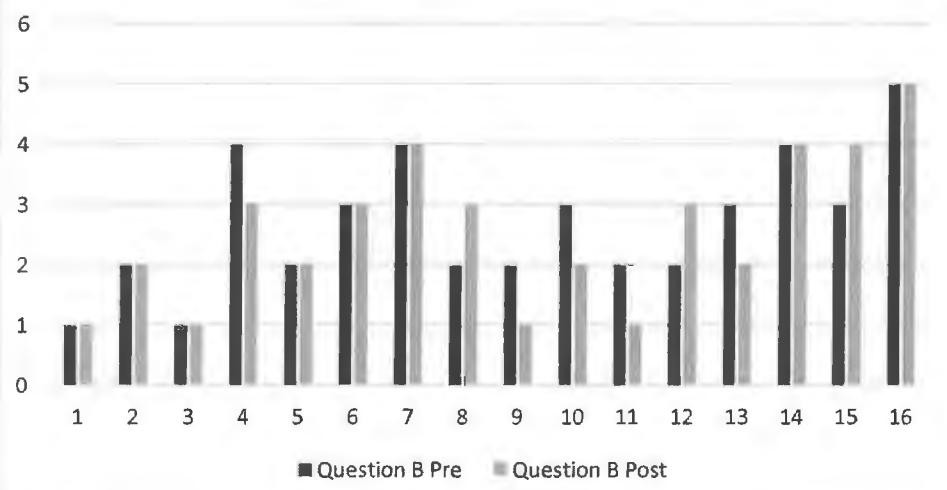
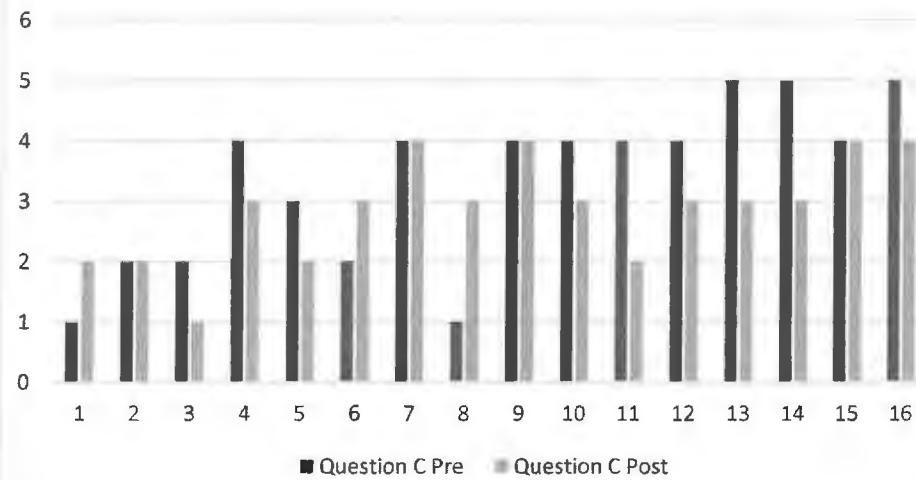


Table 5:29 Manji Photographs 1-16 Question B



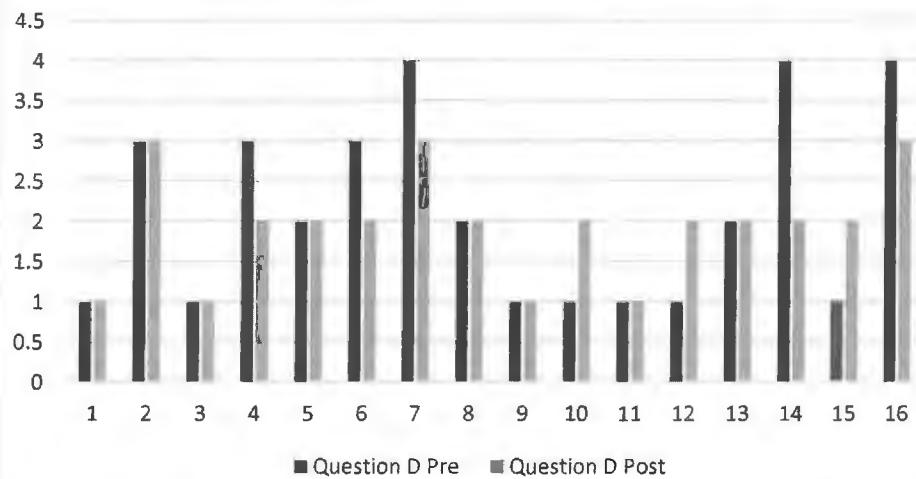
Manji, in the experience of the researcher, is a man who reserves judgment about people based on their actions rather than on their appearance. His answers are very reflective of the fact that he was working solely on physical attributes. Manji was the only participant to rate a Photograph at a level 5 or extremely uncomfortable.

Table 5:30 Manji Photographs 1-16 Question C



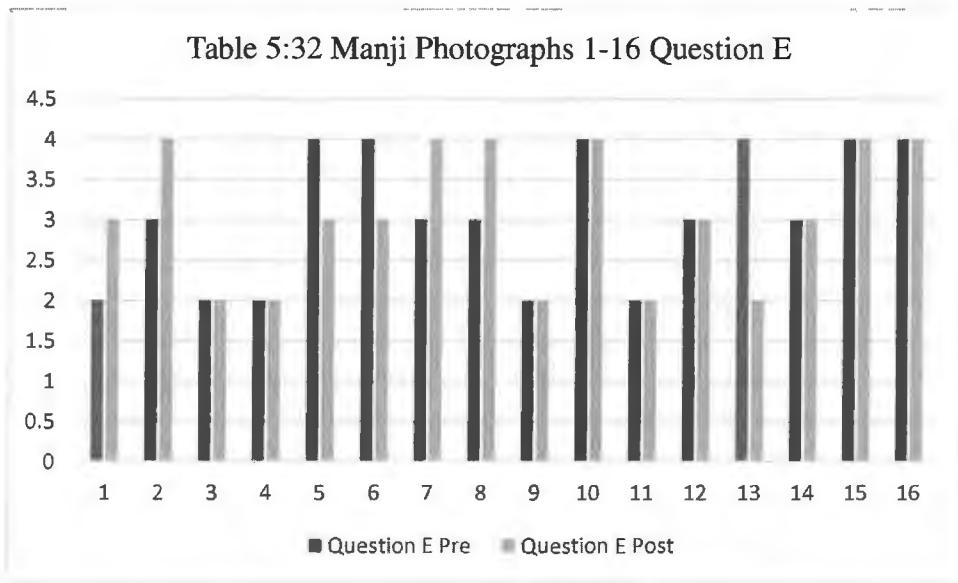
Manji's answers are the most varied of any participant. The variety of answers suggests that Manji was more engaged in the testing than other participants.

Table 5:31 Manji Photographs 1-16 Question D



Manji exhibits a remarkable improvement in comfort in multiple photographs.

This is especially telling in Photograph 14 where his level went from 4 all the way down to 2. No other participant had such an improvement with subject 14.



Manji was also unique in the fact that he was the only participant to rate the subjects on their Christianity and he did so in both the pre- and the post-tests. Of those subjects that he changed opinions from one test to the other, four of them were regression while three were improvements.

## CHAPTER SIX

### REFLECTION, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION

#### **Reflection and Summary**

Adult learning happens on different levels for each person, and this was never more apparent than after the *Anime Spirituality* intervention. “Broken Wings” addressed the real need to begin a conversation with *otaku* to repair their fractured relationship with the Gospel. *Otaku* have been told that their hobby is incompatible with the Gospel of Jesus Christ by some Christians, because certain *anime* are offensive to their beliefs: “Young Christians see our critical and judgmental hearts, and then we wonder why they leave the church and turn to Buddhism or other options.”<sup>1</sup> In the same throw-the-baby-out-with-the-bath-water philosophy, anyone who is a fan of music cannot be compatible with the Gospel of Jesus Christ because of the myriad of lyrics that are offensive.

The researcher assumed that mature, adult Christians would better empathize with *otaku* (a group in which the researcher finds herself), and with that empathy, become better evangelists to that group: “Empathy is typically reactive, but it can also be preventative.”<sup>2</sup> This goal was as noble as it was naïve. While some participants did appear to show marked improvement in their empathetic levels, in some cases the direct opposite was true, but the participants did learn a great deal about *otaku* and why mission and evangelism are important and practical with a group that they had not previously

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<sup>1</sup>Dan Kimball, *They Like Jesus*, 108.

<sup>2</sup>J.D. Trout, *Why Empathy Matters: The Science and Psychology of Better Judgment* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2009), 223.

understood: “Perhaps television shows that support empathetic interaction with those who are marginalized can become one means through which God’s Spirit chastens the church and urges it to live more faithfully in light of *koinonia*, both in and beyond its own wall.”<sup>3</sup>

Participants found that they have more in common with *otaku*, including feelings of isolation and a need for deeper meaning. In their book, *Born For Love*, Maia Szalavitz and Bruce Perry report:

A worrying set of trends shows a measurable decline in social connections in America. For example, 80 percent of Americans say that the only people whom they feel close enough to confide in are family members. A full quarter say that they trust no one at all with their intimate secrets. The proportion of people with no close friends or family tripled between 1985 and 2004.<sup>4</sup>

The assumption that the participants would empathize with *otaku*, based on physical appearance and similarity to themselves, was not conclusive. These participants, as mature Christians, had a bias to treat everyone the same, or at least self-reported this on a higher percentage than the researcher had anticipated. The participants enjoyed the format and the new learning, even if some did not prefer the genre. Participants’ comfort levels increased with each other and with the researcher and, at the end of the intervention, two participants had made an incursion into the lifestyle.

While the class was not intended to make *otaku* out of the participants, the participants’ genuine appreciation of *anime* makes them more authentic in their witness. The participants’ realization that *anime* is a starting place for new connections has broadened their mission field. Inauthentic witness is an often cited reason why youth and

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<sup>3</sup>Latini, “Engaging Our Imagination,” 264.

<sup>4</sup>Maia Szalavitz and Bruce D. Perry, *Born For Love: Why Empathy is Essential – And Endangered* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2010), 3.

young adults leave the Christian church: “Among younger unchurched, two out of three agree that the church is full of hypocrites, people who criticize others for doing the same things they are doing themselves. An overwhelming sense that the church is filled with hypocrites emanates from the younger unchurched.”<sup>5</sup> *Anime* not only opens the door to evangelization, but also improves the well-roundedness of the participant, benefiting both.

While the participants of this intervention may not be able to empathize with *otaku* on all levels, simply knowing the characters’ names, being able to talk about an episode, or even recognizing that the costume they are wearing belongs to an *anime*, is an authentic way to start a conversation: “You might not go to clubs and concerts together, but you certainly can have a friendship. And from friendship comes trust and from trust comes dialog about spirituality and even church.”<sup>6</sup> Empathy engenders friendship and trust. Real friendships are based on authenticity and from mutual interests. From this starting point, each teaches (and at the same time learns) new perspectives. By recognizing a person’s passion, that person receives validation—not only that they exist, but that they have intrinsic worth.

In her article, “Body Language: Clothing Ourselves and Others,” Stephanie Paulsell wrote, “In Baptism, we are not only bathed but clothed.”<sup>7</sup> *Otaku* are used to the idea of being clothed in the life/quality/character of another, and are ready for the deeper spiritual conversation that Christian Baptism entails. It becomes a privilege of the mature Christian to begin this deeper discussion of faith and spiritual beliefs and to become

<sup>5</sup>Stetzer, *Lost and Found*, 32.

<sup>6</sup>Kimball, *They Like Jesus*, 214.

<sup>7</sup>Paulsell, “Body Language,” 18.

mentors to the next generation of new initiates (see Daniel T. Benedict Jr.'s *Come to Waters.*)<sup>8</sup>

The researcher first noticed a new trend at conventions of young people wearing blue/gray face paint and wearing orange and yellow horns that resembled candy corn. At first it was a few people and then hundreds. The researcher looked up these costumes and found that they belonged to a relatively new fandom called Homestuck. While Homestuck, an online roll-playing community, is not *anime*, it draws from the same demographic. She filed this information away for later, and when she met a group of teenagers at a work event dressed in these costumes (minus the makeup), all she had to say was, "Are you a Homestuck group?" and she had an in to conversation with them. They were excited to know that someone recognized them and their passion, even if the researcher was not a Homestuck fan herself.

The largest disappointment the researcher experienced was that the people who needed the information the most were not the people who took the class. At the time, SCUMC's pastor was estranged from his college-age son, who, the father reported, was a fan of *anime*. After having multiple conversations with the pastor, he was unable to articulate what *anime* was, and in fact, announced to the entire congregation that Tracy would be teaching a class on *anime* and that parents were encouraged to attend and find out what their children were reading.<sup>9</sup> *Anime* may have been able to repair a fractured relationship and allow parent and child to reconnect. Through *anime*, with its draws to

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<sup>8</sup>Daniel T. Benedict, *Come to the Waters: Baptism and Our Ministry of Welcoming Seekers and Making Disciples* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 1996).

<sup>9</sup>The pastor's statement indicated his resistance to becoming informed about *anime*, because *anime* is viewed, not read (*manga* is read).

both *otaku* and deep spiritual issues and implications, both could find something meaningful:

Overall, the challenge posed to the church by the teenagers...is as much *theological* as methodological: the hot lava core of Christianity – the story of God’s courtship with us through Jesus Christ, of God’s suffering love through salvation history and especially through Christ’s death and resurrection, and God’s continued involvement in the world through the Holy Spirit – has been muted in many congregations, replaced by ecclesial complacency that convinces youth and parents alike that not much is at stake.<sup>10</sup>

The pastor was not the only person who could have benefited from the class.

Multiple congregants were unable to attend because of the loss of SCUMC’s youth pastor and the subsequent need for volunteers to fill the enormous gap that was left. Both regular members and contextual associates, therefore, had to become volunteer youth pastors.

The practical implications of this project extend to much more than *otaku*. Any outsider group can be better understood with immersion: “...when you read the stories of effective missionaries throughout church history, you discover that they lived among people, built relationship with them, and understood their thinking and beliefs.”<sup>11</sup> A Christian does not need to be a fan of *anime*, video games, sports, or even a certain author of fiction, but by having knowledge about the secular passions of the outsider, trust and companionship can be formed, and from there, real-life witness becomes possible.

When looking at the pre-and post-test results, it became clear that the participants did not recall their original levels of comfort. Allowing participants to gage their own comfort in comparison to their previously stated comfort levels would have allowed them

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<sup>10</sup>Kenda Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling the American Church* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2010), 11.

<sup>11</sup>Kimball, *They Like Jesus*, 167.

to have a deeper self-reflection. Without this reflection, the participants missed a level of adult learning. The researcher should have anticipated that, maybe going so far as to return the original surveys and modify the questions to read, “Are you more or less comfortable than your pre-test answers with speaking to this person in public?” The researcher’s intention was to record the answers without applying the bias the participants may have felt on the first day, but in failing to provide them with the previous answers, the usefulness of the results is limited.

The most significant results of this project, in the opinion of the researcher, were the interactions that the intervention spawned. Sakura went on to help two *otaku* create *Spirited Away* costumes for an October convention. Ryosuke attended the 2013 Khaotic Kon and then became a vendor at the 2013 Southern Media Con with plans to continue into the future. Manji plans to continue to watch Saturday morning *anime* with his boys with the new appreciation of the genre. Tohru has attended every meeting of The TBD Anime Club since the end of the intervention, providing pizza and snacks for the group. Daisuke continues to attend conventions and Emishii continues to be a member of The TBD Anime Club. While the intervention made no great leaps for the kingdom of God, perhaps in its small way, the researcher made a difference to the five people who completed the training, possibly paving the way to a future conversation.

## **Conclusion**

As discussed in Chapter One, the researcher and her husband met a special young man, Yuki, and invited him to become part of their lives. With a shared interest in *anime*, video games, cosplay, and conventions, a true and deep relationship formed. While Yuki spent time at the Zielinski home, he witnessed their faith-life and asked to accompany

them to church. After six months, Yuki said that he finally understood that God still loved him. While this unique and special moment cannot be quantified or proved by repetition, one life restored to the love of God through Jesus Christ is all the proof needed that the Gospel is at work, even through strange, secular things like *anime*.

The researcher hopes that her endeavor will inspire mimesis, and that the reader of this project may find unusual ways in which to turn their passions for secular activities into a magnificent witness for the glory of Jesus Christ.

*What would the church look like if they were more like anime and otaku?*

After completing the project, the researcher began to use her imagination as to how Christianity could benefit by its comparison to *anime* instead of the reverse. She came up with a list of ten ways in which *anime* could positively affect modern Christianity.

1. Christians would know their sacred texts backward and forward. In every Christian home, there would be a book of martyrs and saints telling the rich and varied details of their lives and witness for the Gospel. Like an *otaku* watching individual episodes of their favorite shows, memorizing dialogue, reading the *manga*, and engaging with other fans, Christians exposed to the *anime* fandom could understand the Bible as a cohesive whole, not in snippets: “There is no way to know the kingdom except by learning the story of this man Jesus. For his story defines the nature of how God rules and such a rule creates a ‘world’ and society.”<sup>12</sup> A Christian who develops this skill has the

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<sup>12</sup> Stanley Hauerwas. *A Community of Character: Toward A Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 45.

added benefit of having the words of the Gospel at their command at all times to inspire them and inform their living, truly becoming as Christ.

The character of Katsuragi in the *anime The World God Only Knows* is a perfect *otaku* example of a character who knows his sacred texts inside and out. Katsuragi is an expert in video game dating simulations. His is such an expert that he is dubbed the God of Dating Sims.

Midorima Shintarō of *Kuroko no Basuke*, like most of the basketball players in the show also knows his sport better than the average player. However, he takes the game to a higher level, obsessively studying astrology and horoscopes. He becomes an expert on divining chance, so that he can ensure that all of his slavish hard work cannot be disrupted by anything. In his mind, this kind of devotion to both his sport and his superstition, guarantees his success. He tells a fellow extraordinary player, “Man proposes, God disposes. I am a man that proposes, I always carry my lucky item of the day with me as my horoscope said. That’s why my shots never miss.”<sup>13</sup>

2. Ritual in worship would be celebrated, not denigrated. Some contemporary Christian movements sneer at tradition, doing everything in their power to drown out the still small voice and throw out the beautiful and meaningful past, in order to cater to a traditionally liturgically-impooverished, unchurched demographic. In the Anglican communion there is a current movement to “dumb down” the liturgy of Baptism, removing the aspects of rejecting the devil and repenting of sins – in effect, taking all the meaning out of the vows: “Because of [the church's] anxiety to make everyone feel welcome and its desire not to offend anyone, the new service, almost entirely, does away with sin and the need to repent from its personal and social manifestations and

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<sup>13</sup>*Kuroko no Basuke*, “Your Basketball,” episode 5, May 12, 2012 (originally aired May 5, 2012.)

consequences.”<sup>14</sup> Without mentors and examples of why the tradition is significant and evocative, tradition becomes musty and rote.

2. In Japan, ritual is a daily occurrence, not a burden. From the ritualized words spoken upon leaving or returning to one’s home, to the rituals surrounding food and drink, to the more superstitious rituals of holidays, education, and family, to the best-known ritual, the tea ceremony, the Japanese culture is rife with ritual that is taught from one generation to the next.

During the two seasons of *Sengoku Basara: Samurai Kings*, Keiji Maeda tries to barter peace between his friends and family, the warlords of Japan. While each group sees his intervention in different ways, all of the main characters honor his attempts, going as far as to offer him hospitality, including the ritual of the tea ceremony.

The farmers of *Samurai 7* invite the samurai to partake of their meager meal, but also include the men who will come to save them into their lives as part of the rice planting ritual.

1. Christians would flood the internet and social media to protest social injustice:

[In 2013, m]ore than 125 United Methodist pastors in Northern Illinois signed a pledge...against discrimination toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons, breaking step with the denomination’s current stance on the prohibition of marriage for same sex couples. While some have classified this stance as civil disobedience, those who signed the pledge view it as “Biblical obedience” to the love and radical inclusion that marked the ministry of Jesus.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Sam Jones, “Church of England’s New Baptism Service Condemned By Former Bishop,” *The Guardian* (January 5, 2014), <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jan/05/anglicanism-religion> (accessed January 5, 2014).

<sup>15</sup>Jasmine Young, “Pastors Write Letter of Support of Marriage Equality Bill,” *The Beacon News* (November 5, 2013), <http://beaconnews.suntimes.com/lifestyles/23555189-423/pastors-write-letter-in-support-of-marriage-equality-bill.html> (accessed December 14, 2013).

In an increasingly passive-aggressive society that seeks to right wrongs by garnering public sympathy over direct appeal, internet activism will be the main way in which Christians shake up the world around them.

In *Eden of the East*, the main characters use social media to create a virtual world where disenfranchised youth and young adults can make a difference in the world. They use this virtual world to fight the very real problems of their society, including bullying, crime, and terrorism.

In *Summer Wars*, the main characters live in the real world, but interact also in the virtual world known as OZ, which has become a marketplace of human interaction. When OZ is threatened, all of humanity places their avatars or virtual likenesses into the hands of Natsuki, who must battle an artificial intelligence to prevent the very real threat of world-wide nuclear destruction.

2. Instead of wearing one's "Sunday best," the church would be full of people wearing clothing symbolically manifesting their inner selves or clothing that was a mimetic tribute to others.

Christian students in particular have been taught by their seniors—or has it been the reverse?—that when it comes to church, attire doesn't much matter. They understand there is nothing particularly spiritual about a dress or a coat and tie. God is scarcely impressed by such things. "People look at the outward appearance," we are reminded, "but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7).<sup>16</sup>

The catechumenate, robed and drenched in the waters of baptism becomes more than a soppy (and sappy) mess that goes into the waters and out again without transformation. Instead, the catechumenate takes on an entirely new identity, shedding the old wardrobe of sin and death and taking up the new, pure mantel of Christ. As each new

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<sup>16</sup>Duane Liftin, "Clothing Matters: What We Wear to Church," *Christianity Today* (January 11, 2012), <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2012/januaryweb-only/clothingmatters.html> (accessed December 14, 2013).

Christian puts on this raiment, their personal wearing of the garment affects the whole of the Christian community.

In *Hakuōki*, the members of the *Shinsengumi* are considered to be nothing more than vigilantes until they receive the prefectural government's blessing and the uniforms that come with it.<sup>17</sup> When they are presented with uniforms, their dedication and hope are renewed.

3. Bible readings would take on an element of performance as the community lived into the stories of their faith: "For Jesus' universality is manifested only by a people who are willing to take his cross as their story, as a necessary condition for living truthfully in this life."<sup>18</sup> (For an excellent homiletic example, see *Performing the Word* by Jana Childers.<sup>19</sup>) This initiative, coming from the front (worship leaders and preachers) would result in the congregation paying more attention to the pivotal text of the faith. As is, a boring recitation of any text does not engender learning; a monotone voice, in fact, would make the text harder to understand. As the performer of the Word speaks and emotes the text, they build an empathetic reaction in the ears and hearts of the listener, helping the internalization of the essential.

The story of *Intrigue in the Bakumatsu* followed a troupe of actors who sought to avenge a murder by using their plays to teach the populace about the evil deeds of the powerful man who murdered, maimed, and destroyed their families.

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<sup>17</sup>The historical *Shinsengumi*, upon whom this story is loosely based, were the police of the *Bakumatsu* era (1853-1867) of Japan. They marked the transitional time between the end of the *samurai* and Japan becoming open to the West. Prefectures in Japan are equivalent to the individual states that make up the United States of America.

<sup>18</sup>Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 14.

<sup>19</sup>Jana Childers, *Preaching the Word: Preaching As Theatre* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998.)

4. Christians would reclaim the communal meal from its origins: “The church used the communal meal as an opportunity for believers to discover their identity in Christ and to learn what God expected of them as citizens of his kingdom.”<sup>20</sup> Reforms of the common meal could include the tradition of sharing meals in the homes of fellow believers and in the visitation to the home/hospital bound members of congregations. Every meal shared between Christians would become a moment to reflect on the working of Christ in the distinct moments of life. Meals would become reflective, not purely physically sustaining. As for the *otaku* at conventions, who use the meal times to reconnect with friends, share news and cosplay techniques, and have a time to “squee” about what is most important to them.<sup>21</sup>

In the above mentioned *Summer Wars*, the “action” may happen in the virtual world, but the heroes live in a very real world. The story begins with a birthday celebration for the family’s grandmother. The members of the family gather around her long table, eat, drink, and reconnect. Halfway through the story, the family suffers a great loss and the second communal meal centers around a funeral where they remember, as a group, the wonderful woman they have lost.

5. More Christians would study the language of their faith because they would, according to Dr. Larry L. Welborn, professor at Fordham University, realize that a translation stood between the reader (or hearer) and the original message.<sup>22</sup> Learning the original language of the faith may seem like a chore to begin with, but as Christians

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<sup>20</sup>R. Alan Street, *Subversive Meals: An Analysis of the Lord’s Supper Under Roman Domination in the First Century* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013), Kindle.

<sup>21</sup>“Squee” is an onomatopoeia expression of joy.

<sup>22</sup>Laurence Welborn, “Greek I” (lecture, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, OH, Fall, 2000).

explore the nuances of the original text, they learn that words and their meanings are more than just specific definition, but are concepts that speak with authority and flexibility in the current age.

In *Initial D: The First Stage*, Takumi Fujiwara, is a high school student who works in his father's tofu shop. His friends are obsessed with car racing, but he does not understand their passion. As he listens to his friends discuss the concept of drifting, he recognizes what they are talking about, but it is like they are speaking a foreign language. What Takumi's friends do not realize, is that he has been driving his father's race car to make deliveries since he turned fourteen. These concepts of driving, put into words, are foreign to Takumi, but in practice, he is far ahead of his friends. Takumi does not allow their translation of the skills of driving influence his understanding of racing.

6. The church would be more welcoming and more accepting across denominational, doctrinal, and confessional lines:

So we are a people who are needed to remind religious congregations not only of human diversity but also of the fact that all of us in all our diversity are made in the image of one dazzling diverse Spirit. If we insist that congregational worship must reflect that dazzlingly diversity, we shall do justice toward the entire human race and the national creation as well.<sup>23</sup>

In today's church, the concept of ecumenism only applies to those within your own faith tradition. Christians can associate more easily with other Christians, than with their brothers and sisters from non-Judeo-Christian traditions. However, that is not the spirit of ecumenism. Coexistence does not necessarily engender acceptance. Living with our brothers from the Muslim world, or even Hindu, would not be an exception or a goal, but a normal facet of life.

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<sup>23</sup>Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, "We Came Bearing Gifts: Seven Lessons Religious Congregations Can Learn From Transpeople," in *Transformations*, eds. Lisa Isherwood and Marcella Althaus-Reid (London, England: SCM Press, 2009), 50.

In *Mobile Suit Gundam 00*, the four main characters come from different countries and different faith traditions (Irish Catholic and Muslim), but join together with a mysterious military organization, Celestial Being, with the goal of ending warfare among the three vast empires who control the planet. In *Ghost Hunt*, the Shibuya Psychic Research Company brought together a psychic medium, a Buddhist monk, a Shinto shrine maiden, a Taoist exorcist, and a Catholic priest to solve mysteries and set trapped spirits free. While in the beginning of the show, the characters attempted to show the superiority of their doctrine, the group quickly discovered that combining their different systems and knowledge often lead to the best results.

7. Older (or more mature) church-goers would pass on their passion to the younger generation, including teaching them the practical skills of fostering the next generation. The older generation would reciprocally learn from those who follow them: “The social ethical task of the church, therefore is to be the kind of community that tells and tells rightly the story of Jesus. But it can never forget that Jesus’ story is a many-sided tale.”<sup>24</sup> Mentoring isn’t just passing alone information, but also behavioral. Christians should strive to not merely recite scripture, but to encourage those coming along in the faith to explore the depth and meaning of the passages: “Bringing people to faith through baptismal preparation has been much more than a way to gain new members for the church. It has opened our eyes to a new way of being people of God. Forming others in faith has formed us for ministry and outreach.”<sup>25</sup> By teaching this cognitive skill, these

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<sup>24</sup>Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 45.

<sup>25</sup>Paul E. Hoffman, “Faith Forming Faith: Learning From New Christians,” *Christian Century* 128, no. 18 (2011): 21.

teachers may learn new things from their students as the students learn their own interpretation of scripture and share what they have learned with others

In *Usagi Drop*, after his grandfather's death, the bachelor Daikichi takes in his grandfather's illegitimate six-year-old daughter. While teaching the girl, Rin, about stability, family, and tradition, Rin then teaches Daikichi responsibility, hope, and love.

8. The Christian community would once again remember the widows and orphans: “...‘visiting’ of orphans and widows in their distress involves a ministry among them that imparts life. It mustn’t be limited to providing them merely with commodities. We are to share our own lives, and invite them to taste of Christ’s life.”<sup>26</sup> Christians are called to become the family of the widows and orphans by inviting them into their family. Many *otaku* feel they have been abandoned by their family and have thus become orphans, only to claim, and be claimed by, their fellow *otaku* as brothers and sisters.

To say that *anime* is littered with orphans would not be an exaggeration. From Ed and Al Elric in *Fullmetal Alchemist*, to Tohru in *Fruits Basket*, to Zero in *Vampire Knight*, there are more *anime* with orphans than not. It falls to the people surrounding these orphans to care for them like family. For the Elrics they have the Rockbells, Tohru has the Somas, and Zero has the Crosses. Without the support of each of these adopted families, the characters would have fallen into despair and been unable to continue in their quests.

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<sup>26</sup>Amy L. Sherman, “Visiting Orphans and Widows,” *Faith and Community Ministries* 22, no. 2. (2008): 26.

**APPENDIX A**  
**ANNOTATED ANIME BIBLIOGRAPHY**

The purpose of this appendix is to provide, in a single location, a bibliographical reference of all *anime* referenced in this project. Each entry includes the original Japanese information, followed by its corresponding American release information in parentheses. The first bullet point gives a brief description of the *anime*, followed by an explanation of why it was used or referenced in the project. The *anime*'s ranking is as recorded by the internet site, Anime News Network

Example:

Japanese director. *Title*. City, State: Japanese production company, dates released.  
(American release information).

*Title* is based on the *manga*, *Title* by Name.

- In the television show, *Title*, Character One is an orphan ...
- *Title* was used in the intervention because it ...
- *Title* is ranked...

**1. Abe, Noriyuki, director. *Bleach*. Mitaka, Tokyo, Japan: Studio Pierrot, 2004-2012. (*Bleach*. San Francisco, CA: Viz Media, 2006-2013.)**

*Bleach* is based on the *manga* of the same name by Tite Kubo. *Bleach* has also been adapted into four full-length animated feature films, multiple video games, a collectable card game, two light novels, an art book, theatre shows, radio drama, and four data books which include information about the fictional characters and their world.

- *Bleach*, the television show, centers on Ichigo Kurosaki, a human teenager who can see ghosts. He obtains the power of Soul Reaper and his adventures include defending humans from evil spirits and sending the dead to the afterlife.
- *Bleach* is included in this project because of its themes and its popularity among American *otaku*. Photograph number 18 of the PowerPoint® Pre/Post Test is of the character of Ichigo Kukrosaki. The TBD Anime Club watched episodes 58-60 as part of the first year's curriculum, where it fostered a discussion about betrayal.

- Ranked #10 in Anime News Network's Top Ten Most Popular Anime and #3 in The Top Ten Most Viewed Anime.<sup>1</sup>
- *Bleach* is ranked #3 in Anime News Network's Top Ten Most Popular Manga and #3 on the Top Ten Most Viewed Manga.<sup>2</sup>
- At the 2007 American Anime Awards, *Bleach* was nominated for “Best Manga,” “Best Voice Actor” (Johnny Yong Bosch and Yuri Lowenthal), “Best Actress” (Michelle Ruff), “Best DVD Package Design,” and “Best Anime Theme Song” (“\*Asterisk” by Orange Range).<sup>3</sup>

**2. Anno, Hideaki, director. *Neon Genesis Evangelion*. Mitaka, Tokyo, Japan: Gainax, 1995-1996. (*Neon Genesis Evangelion Complete Platinum Collection*. Houston, TX: ADV Films, 2008.)**

*Neon Genesis Evangelion* is based on a *manga* of the same name by Yoshiyuki Sadamoto. *Neon Genesis Evangelion* has been adapted into five full-length animated feature films, additional *manga*, card games, video games, role-playing games, visual novels, art books, and radio dramas.

- In the television show, *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, teenagers fight hostile invading forces called “Angels” in this post-apocalyptic, mecha *anime*.
- *Neon Genesis Evangelion* is included in this project because it was specifically mentioned by a respondent of the Anime Fan Pre-test.
- Ranked #8 in Anime News Network's Top Ten Most Popular Anime and #6 in The Top Ten Most Viewed Anime.<sup>4</sup>
- *Neon Genesis Evangelion* was nominated for the 2013 American Anime Award for “Best Manga.”<sup>5</sup>

**3. Araki, Tetsurō, director. *Death Note*. Honchō, Nakano, Tokyo: Madhouse, 2006-2007. (*Death Note Box Set*. San Francisco, CA: Viz Media, 2009.)**

*Death Note* is based on the *manga* of the same name by Tsugumi Ohba. *Death Note* has been adapted into three live-action films, a light novel, and multiple video games.

- In the television show, *Death Note*, teenager Light Yagami finds a book that gives him the power to kill anyone whose name he writes in the book. He uses this power to rid

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<sup>1</sup>Anime News Network, “Anime Rankings.”

<http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/encyclopedia/ratings-Anime.php> (accessed August 29, 2013)

<sup>2</sup>Anime News Network, “Manga Rankings.”

<http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/encyclopedia/ratings-manga.php> (accessed August 29, 2013)

<sup>3</sup>Anime News Network, “American Anime Awards Finalists Announced.” (February 7, 2007), <http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/press-release/2007-02-07/american-anime-awards-finalists-announced> (accessed November 24, 2013).

<sup>4</sup>Anime News Network, “Anime Rankings.”

<sup>5</sup>Anime News Network, “American Anime Awards Finalists Announced.”

the world of criminals that the law cannot touch. He is pursued as a serial killer by the world's greatest detective.

- *Death Note* episodes 1-4 were shown to The TBD Anime Club during the first year and was part of the curriculum to foster discussion about temptation.
- Ranked #2 in Anime News Network's Top Ten Most Popular Anime and #2 in The Top Ten Most Viewed Anime.<sup>6</sup>
- The *Death Note* manga is ranked #1 in Anime News Network's Top Ten Most Popular Manga and #2 on the Top Ten Most Viewed Manga.<sup>7</sup>
- *Death Note* was nominated for the 2007 American Anime Awards' "Best Manga."<sup>8</sup>

**4. Aramaki, Shinji, director, *Appleseed*. Akasaka, Tokyo, Japan: Geneon, 2004. (*Appleseed*. Houston, TX: Sentai Filmworks, 2009.)**

*Appleseed* is based on the *manga* of the same name by Shirow Masamune. *Appleseed* has also been adapted into three full-length animated films and a television series.

- *Appleseed*, a full-length feature film, follows solider Deunan Knute as she looks for the data that will allow bioroids, genetically engineered clones, to reproduce.
- *Appleseed* was shown to The TBD Anime Club during the first year and was part of the curriculum to foster discussion about the nature of humanity.

**5. Asaka, Morio, director. *Gunslinger Girl*. Honchō, Nakano, Tokyo: Madhouse, 2003-2004. (*Gunslinger Girl*. Flower Mound, TX: FUNimation, 2007.)**

*Gunslinger Girl* is based on the *manga* of the same name by Yu Aida. *Gunslinger Girl* has two seasons and has been adapted into video games.

- *Gunslinger Girl* is a television show about young girls who become cybernetic assassins after their death.
- *Gunslinger Girl* is included in the review of literature for the philosophical concepts of justice and morality. The TBD Anime Club watched this in its third year.

**6. Barron, Robert V. and Ippei Kuri, directors, *Robotech*. Houston, TX: ADV Films, 1985.**

- *Robotech* centers on alien technology that allows humans to build *mecha* and fight off alien invasions.
- *Robotech* is included in this project because it is a combination of three different *anime* to make one television show. It was produced in the United States in an attempt to make *anime* more palatable to Western audiences. The three shows that were combined

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<sup>6</sup>Anime News Network, "Anime Rankings"

<sup>7</sup>Anime News Network, "Manga Rankings."

<sup>8</sup>Anime News Network, "American Anime Awards Finalists Announced."

are *The Super Dimension Fortress Macross*, *Super Dimension Calvary Southern Cross*, and *Genesis Climber MOSPEADA*, all of which still survive in one form or another in both Japan and the United States.

- *Robotech* appears as part of the review of literature because of its significant contribution to *anime*'s popularity in the United States.

**7. Chigira, Koichi, director. *Full Metal Panic!* Sugnimai, Tokyo, Japan: Gonzo, 2002. (*Full Metal Panic!* Flower Mound, TX: FUNimation, 2005.)**

*FMP!* (as it is called by its fans) is based on the Light Novel by Shoji Gotoh. It has *also* been adapted into *manga* and a television show sequel.

- *Full Metal Panic!* follows the counter-terrorism organization *Mithril* and its attempt to protect a high school girl from being kidnapped for her special psychic powers.
- *Full Metal Panic!* is mentioned for its use of imitation and mimicry.

**8. Daichi, Akitaro, director. *Fruits Basket*. Japan: Studio Deen, 2001. (*Fruits Basket: The Complete Collection*. Flower Mound, TX: FUNimation, 2011.)**

*Fruits Basket* is based on the *manga* of the same name by Natsuki Takaya. *Fruits Basket* has also been adapted into radio dramas and artbooks.

- *Fruits Basket* follows orphan high school student Tohru Honda as she comes to live with the Sohma family and attempts to break the curse that has followed them for generations.
- *Fruits Basket* is included in this project for several reasons. The TBD Anime Club watched episodes 1-5 as a conversation starter about compassion and sacrificial love. For the same reason, episode 24, the show's finale, was used in the project's intervention.
- The *Fruits Basket* *manga* is ranked #4 in Anime News Network's Top Ten Most Popular Manga.<sup>9</sup>
- *Fruits Basket* won the 2013 America Anime Awards for "Best Manga."

**9. Date, Hayato, director. *Naruto*. Mitaka, Tokyo, Japan: Studio Pierrot, 2002-2007 (*Naruto Uncut Box Set*. San Francisco, CA: Viz Media, 2009-2010.)**

*Naruto* is based on the *manga* of the same name by Masashi Kishimoto. The *Naruto* franchise includes two *anime* television series, a spoof, five OVAs, nine feature-length animated films, three light novels, fifty-five video games, collectable trading card games, and art and guide books.

- *Naruto* follows a young boy of the same name who dreams of becoming the strongest *ninja* in the world, but he is hampered by a curse that lives in his body.
- *Naruto* is included in this project for multiple reasons. It was the second *anime* viewed by The TBD Anime Club, which watched five episodes in the "Bridge Builder's

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<sup>9</sup>Anime News Network, "Manga Rankings."

Arc" as a conversation starter about sacrifice. For the same reason, episode 19 was used in the project's intervention.

- Ranked #5 in Anime News Network's Top Ten Most Viewed Anime.<sup>10</sup>
- The *Naruto manga* is ranked #2 in Anime News Network's Top Ten Most Popular Manga and #1 on the Top Most Viewed Manga.<sup>11</sup>
- *Naruto* was nominated for "Best Long Series," "Best Manga," "Best Cast," "Best Voice Actor" (Yuri Lowenthal) and "Best DVD Package Design" at the 2007 American Anime Awards.<sup>12</sup> Voice actor, Maile Flanagan won the award for "Best Actress" at the same awards ceremony for her work on the series.<sup>13</sup>

**10. Date, Hayato, director. *Saiyuki*. Mitaka, Tokyo, Japan: Studio Pierrot, 2000-2001. (*Saiyuki*. Houston, TX: ADV Films, 2006.)**

*Saiyuki* is based on the *manga* of the same name by Kazuya Minekura. *Saiyuki* has been adapted into an OVA prequel, a feature-length animated feature film, a number of art books, and two video games. The *manga* also has two full-length sequels.

- *Saiyuki* is the story of Genjyo Sanzo, a Buddhist priest, on his journey west as he and his companions travel to stop the resurrection of a demon.
- *Saiyuki* is included in this project because the researcher also was a part of the *Saiyuki* panel at Necromonicon.

**11. Furuhashi, Kazuhiro and Keitaro Motonaga, directors. *Getbackers*. Japan: Studio Deen, 2002-2003. (*Getbackers*. Houston, TX: ADV Films, 2006-2007.)**

*Getbackers* is based on a *manga* of the same name by Shin Kibayashi and Rando Ayamine. *Getbackers* has been adapted into two radio dramas and five video games.

- *Getbackers* follows the adventure of two young men, Ginji Amano and his partner Ban Mido who use their supernatural powers to "get back" things that people have lost.
- The TBD Anime Club watched the first five episodes of the *anime* as a conversation starter about redemption. The researcher also was a part of the *Getbackers* panel at Necronomicon.

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<sup>10</sup> Anime News Network, "Manga Rankings."

<sup>11</sup> Anime News Network, "Manga Rankings."

<sup>12</sup> Anime News Network, "American Anime Awards Finalists Announced."

<sup>13</sup> Anime News Network, "American Anime Award Winners." February 24, 2007. (accessed November 24, 2013).

**12. Gōda, Hiroaki, director. *Ah! My Goddess*. Nerima, Tokyo, Japan: AIC, 2005 (Oh! My Goddess Complete Collection TV Series. New York, NY: Anime Works, 2009.)**

*Ah! My Goddess* is based on the *manga* of the same name by Kōsuke Fujishima. *Ah! My Goddess* has been adapted into one full-length animated feature film, one light novel, two OVAs, and three video games.

- *Ah! My Goddess* is about Keiichi Morisato, young college student who calls the Goddess Technical Help Line and Belldandy, a goddess, comes to grant his wish. *Ah, My Goddess* is a *Seinen anime* targeted to 18-30 year old men.
- *Ah! My Goddess* is included in this project because it is an *anime* that is loosely based on Norse mythology and was discussed as part of the “Western Mythology and Religion in *Anime and Manga*” panel at Metrocon.
- *Ah! My Goddess* was nominated for “Best Comedy Anime” at the 2013 American Anime Awards.<sup>14</sup>

**13. Hamasaki, Hiroshi, director. *Texhnolyze*. Nakano, Japan, Tokyo: Madhouse, 2003. (*Texhnolyze. The Complete Series*. Flower Mound, TX: FUNimation, 2012.)**

*Texhnolyze* is not based on any other work and has not been adapted further.

- In *Texhnolyze*, Ichise is an orphan turned prize fighter who loses an arm and leg to the anger of his promoter. He becomes the subject of experimentation gaining new Texhnolyzed limbs and learns of his possible future from a young prophetess.
- *Texhnolyze* is included in this project because of its contribution to the various genre of music used in *anime*.

**14. Hirata, Tomohiro, director. *Trinity Blood*. Suginami, Tokyo, Japan: Gonzo, 2005 (US Release FUNimation, 2008) (*Trinity Blood: The Complete Collection*. Flower Mound, TX: FUNimation Entertainment, 2008.)**

*Trinity Blood* is based on the light novel written by Yoshida Sunao and was continued after his death by Yasui Kentaro. *Trinity Blood* was adapted into a *manga*.

- *Trinity Blood* follows Catholic priest and vampire Abel Nightroad in his quest to protect the world from evil vampires.
- *Trinity Blood* is included in the project for multiple reasons. *Trinity Blood* was the actual inspiration for the project. After watching episode two, “Witch Hunter,” the researcher began to think about her own relationship with *otaku* and how she and Fr. Nightroad shared a common mission to help outsiders feel the love of God. *Trinity Blood* was the first *anime* shown to The TBD Anime Club. Likewise, *Trinity Blood* was the first episode of *anime* shown in the intervention.

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<sup>14</sup>Anime News Network, “American Anime Awards Finalists Announced.”

**15. Hosoda, Mamoru, director. *Summer Wars*. Honchō, Nakano, Tokyo, Japan: Madhouse, 2009. (Summer Wars. Flower Mound, TX: Fumination, 2013).**

*Summer Wars* is a full-length movie and was adapted into a series of novels.

- *Summer Wars* is a full-length movie about a math whiz who pretends to be his friend's fiancée at her grandmother's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration. He inadvertently releases a computer virus that threatens to destroy that real world with a nuclear bomb and together, the two must stop the virus.
- *Summer Wars* is included in this project's implications section.

**16. Kamei, Kanta, director. *Usagi Drop*. Kokubunji, Tokyo, Japan: Production I.G, 2011. (This title is not licensed in the United States as of this writing, but it is available streaming on the website Crunchyroll. If it becomes licensed in the United States, it will most likely be known as *Bunny Drop*.)**

*Usagi Drop* is an *anime* series based on the *manga* of the same name by Yumi Unit and it has been further adapted into a full-length live-action film.

- *Usagi Drop* tells the story of a young bachelor who adopts his grandfather's illegitimate daughter.
- *Usagi Drop* is included in the implications section of this paper.

**17. Kamiyama, Kenji, director. *Higashi no Eden*. Kokubunji, Tokyo, Japan: Production I.G, 2009. (*Eden of the East*. Flower Mound, TX: Fumination, 2011.)**

*Eden of the East* is an *anime* series that was concluded with two movies and adapted into two novels.

- *Eden of the East* tells the story of the events that follow a terrorist attack on Japan.
- *Eden of the East* is included in the implications section of this paper.

**18. Kamiyama, Kenji, director. *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex 2<sup>nd</sup> Gig*. Kokubunji, Tokyo, Japan: Production I.G., 2002-2003. (*Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex 2<sup>nd</sup> Gig: Complete Collection*. Cypress, CA: Bandai Entertainment, 2010.)**

*Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex 2<sup>nd</sup> Gig* is based on the *manga* *Ghost in the Shell* written by Shirow Masamune. The *Ghost in the Shell* universe also includes three full-length animated films, one video game, and an OVA miniseries.

- *GITS:SAC 2<sup>nd</sup> Gig*, is the second season of a television show that follows the adventures of Major Motoko Kusanagi and the Public Security Section 9 security force of Japan as they fight cybercrime.
- *GITS:SAC 2<sup>nd</sup> Gig* is included in the project for multiple reasons. *GITS:SAC 2<sup>nd</sup> Gig* was the inspiration for the origami crane activity of sessions 1 and sessions 6.

*GITS:SAC 2<sup>nd</sup> Gig* episodes 23-26 were shown to The TBD Anime Club. Likewise, it was shown in the last session of the intervention.

- *GITS:SAC 2<sup>nd</sup> Gig* was nominated for “Best Actress” (Mary Elizabeth McGlynn), “Best Cast,” and “Best Anime Theme Song” (“Rise” by Origa) in the 2013 American Anime Awards.<sup>15</sup>

**19. Kawasaki, Itsuro. *Sengoku Basara: Samurai Kings*. Kokubunji, Tokyo, Japan: Studio I.G, 2009. (*Sengoku Basara: Samurai Kings*. Flower Mound, TX: FUNimation, 2010-2011.)**

*Sengoku Basara: Samurai Kings* is based on a video game.

- *Sengoku Basara: Samurai Kings* is a television show about the historical Basara period of Japan’s history and follows the supernatural aspects of the time period’s greatest warriors.
- *Sengoku Basara: Samurai Kings* was mentioned in the implications section of the paper.

**20. Kishi, Seiji, director. *Kamisama Dolls*. Mitaka City, Japan: Brain’s Base, 2011. (*Kamisama Dolls: Complete Collection*. Houston, TX: Sentai Filmworks, 2013.)**

*Kamisama Dolls* is based on the *manga* by Hajime Yamamura.

- *Kamisama Dolls*, is a television show about Kyōhei, a college student who used to control his village’s wooden god. After a tragic death, Kyōhei leaves the village and helps train his sister as his replacement.
- *Kamisama Dolls* was mentioned in this paper for its unique theme song and was used as an example of the many varied kinds of music that are included in *anime*.

**21. Kitakubo, Hiroyuki, director. *Blood: The Last Vampire*. Kokubunji, Tokyo: Production I.G., 2000. (*Blood: The Last Vampire*. Chicago, IL: Manga Entertainment, 2001.)**

*Blood: The Las Vampire* inspired a *manga* sequel called *Blood the Last Vampire 2002*, as well as two light novels, an *anime* television series, and a live-action feature-length film.

- *Blood: The Last Vampire* is a full-length animated film about a Saya, a young woman who hunts vampires on an American air force base in Japan during the Vietnam conflict.
- *Blood: The Last Vampire* was mentioned in this paper because it was shown in the first year of The TBD Anime Club.

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<sup>15</sup>Anime News Network, “American Anime Awards Finalists Announced.”

22. Kou, Yuu. *Uta no Prince-sama Maji LOVE 1000%*. Suginami, Tokyo, Japan: A-1 Pictures, 2011. (*Uta no Prince-sama Maji LOVE 1000%*. Houston, TX: Sentai Filmworks, 2013.)

*UtaPri* (as it is called by fans) was inspired by a dating video game of the same name.

- *UtaPri* is a television show about a young girl who attends school to become a composer, where she works with six (later seven) young men who are attempting to become pop stars. Their goal is to make the world happy with music.
- *UtaPri* was mentioned in this paper because of its use of mimesis and imitation.

23. Mano, Rei, director. *Ghost Hunt*. Musashino, Tokyo, Japan: J.C. Staff, 2006-2007. (Ft. Worth, TX: FUNimation, 2008.)

*Ghost Hunt* is based on two series' of light novels written by Ono Fuyumi.

- *Ghost Hunt*, is a television show about a female high school student who gets an after school job with a psychic detective agency after hiring them to get rid of the ghosts at her school.
- *Ghost Hunt* was mentioned in this paper because episodes #12-13 “File 5: Silent Christmas Part 1 & 2” were shown at the first The TBD Anime Club Christmas party.

24. Matsumoto, Leiji and Noboru Ishiguro, directors. *Space Battleship Yamato*. Japan: Academy Productions, 1974-75. (*Star Blazers: The Complete Collection*. Teaneck, NJ: Voyager Entertainment Inc., 2000-2002.)

*Space Battleship Yamato* was adapted into a *manga* written by Leiji Matsumoto. It has also been adapted into seven animated sequels and one full-length animated film, as well as a live-action full-length film.

- *Space Battleship Yamato*, is a television show about the survivors of an alien invasion fleeing the earth in a battleship.
- *Space Battleship Yamato* was mentioned in this paper because it is mentioned by multiple authors in the review of literature as one of the seminal works of *anime* that influenced many newer works.

25. Masunari, Koji, directors. *Kamichu!* Akasaka, Toyko, Japan: Geneon Universal Entertainment, 2005. (*Kamichu!* Flower Mound, TX: FUNimation, 2005-2007.)

*Kamichu!* began as *anime* and was adapted into a *manga*.

- *Kamichu!* is a television show set in the 1980s about a female middle school student who replaces the local Shinto god. She and her friends use her status as the local god to revitalize the town.

- *Kamichu!* was mentioned in this paper because it is mentioned in the review of literature as one of the seminal works of *anime* that influenced many newer works.

**26. Mitsusawa, Noboru, director. *Initial D: First Stage*. Toyotamanaka, Nerima, Tokyo, Japan: Studio Comet, 1998. (*Initial D: First Stage*. Los Angeles, CA: TokyoPop, 1998).**

*Initial D: First Stage* (originally known as *Initial D* until sequels were produced) began as a *manga* written by Shuichi Shigeno and was adapted into multiple seasons of *anime*, one full-length animated film, one full-length live-action film, and two OVAs.

- *Initial D: First Stage* is the story of Takumi, a boy who reluctantly becomes involved in the street racing scene in Japan's mountains.
- *Initial D: First Stage* was referenced in the implications section of the paper.

**27. Miyazaki, Hayao, director. *Kiki's Delivery Service*. Tokyo, Japan: Studio Ghibli, 1989. (Walt Disney). (*Kiki's Delivery Service*. Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Home Entertainment, 2003.)**

*Kiki's Delivery Service* is an original story and has no further adaptations.

- *Kiki's Delivery Service*, is full-length animated feature film about a thirteen year old witch, Kiki, and her year of living on her own in preparation for becoming an independent witch.
- *Kiki's Delivery Service* was referenced in the review of literature. It is significant because of the English-language translation done by Walt Disney Pictures.

**28. Miyazaki, Hayao, director. *Laputa: Castle in the Sky*. Tokyo, Japan: Studio Ghibli, 1986. (*Castle in the Sky*. Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Home Entertainment, 2012.)**

*Laputa: Castle in the Sky* is an original story and has no further adaptations.

- *Laputa: Castle in the Sky*, is full-length animated feature film about a Sheeta and a boy name Pazu who rediscover the lost flying castle.
- *Laputa: Castle in the Sky* was referenced in the review of literature. It is significant because of the English-language translation done by Walt Disney Pictures.

**29. Miyazaki, Hayao, director. *My Neighbor Totoro*. Tokyo, Japan: Studio Ghibli, 1988. (*My Neighbor Totoro*. Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Home Entertainment, 2006.)**

*My Neighbor Totoro* is an original story and has no further adaptations.

- *My Neighbor Totoro*, is full-length animated feature film about two young girls coping with their mother's illness. They are helped along the way by the spirit of the forest and a *Shinto* god, Totoro.

- *My Neighbor Totoro* was referenced in the review of literature for its significant spiritual content. It is significant because of the English-language translation done by Walt Disney Pictures.

**30. Miyazaki, Hayao, director. *Princess Mononoke*. Tokyo, Japan: Studio Ghibli, 1997. (*Princess Mononoke*. Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Home Entertainment, 2000.)**

*Princess Mononoke* is an original story and has no further adaptations.

- *Princess Mononoke*, is full-length animated feature film set in the *Muromachi* period of Japanese history (1337-1573) about a prince who defeats an evil demon, but not before the demon can curse him. Searching for the cure, he travels to Irontown. Irontown is at war with local forest gods and her servant, the titular Princess Mononoke. The Prince falls in love with the princess and helps end the war.
- *Princess Mononoke* was referenced in the review of literature for its significant spiritual content. It is significant because of the English-language translation done by Walt Disney Pictures.
- *Princess Mononoke* is ranked #9 in Anime News Network's Top Ten Best Rated Anime, #6 in the Top Ten Most Popular Anime, and #9 The Top Ten Most Viewed Anime.<sup>16</sup>

**31. Miyazaki, Hayao, director. *Spirited Away*. Tokyo, Japan: Studio Ghibli, 2001. (*Spirited Away*. Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Home Entertainment, 2003.)**

*Spirited Away* is an original story and has no further adaptations.

- *Spirited Away*, is full-length animated feature film in which ten-year-old Chihiro must save her parents from a magical world.
- *Spirited Away* was referenced in the review of literature for its significant spiritual content. It is significant because of the English-language translation done by Walt Disney Pictures.
- *Spirited Away* received the Academy Award for best Animated Feature of 2003. It is also ranked #7 in Anime News Network's Top Ten Best Rated Anime, #4 in Anime News Network's Top Ten Most Popular Anime, and #10 in the Top Ten Most Viewed Anime.

**32. Mizushima, Seiji, director. *Fullmetal Alchemist*. Suginami, Tokyo, Japan: Bones, 2003-2004. (*Fullmetal Alchemist 1<sup>st</sup> Season Collection & Fullmetal Alchemist 2<sup>nd</sup> Season Collection*. Flower Mound, TX: FUNimation, 2009-2010.)**

*Fullmetal Alchemist* is based on the *manga* of the same name by Hiromu Arakawa. It has been further adapted into a second television show, two movies, six light novels, two radio dramas, seven video games, and three art and guide books.

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<sup>16</sup>Anime News Network, "Anime Rankings."

- *Fullmetal Alchemist*, is the story of two brothers who attempt to bring their mother back from the dead using Alchemy. As they fail, the older brother loses one limb and sacrifices another to anchor his brother, who has lost his entire body, to a suit of armour. The two brothers search for a way to restore their bodies.
- *Fullmetal Alchemist* was included in this project because episodes 1 and 2 were shown to The TBD Anime Club. The episodes deal with attempts to bring the dead back to life and false prophets.
- *Fullmetal Alchemist* is ranked #1 in Anime News Network's Top Ten Most Popular Anime, #5 in Anime News Network's Top Ten Most Popular Manga, and #5 in The Top Most Watched Anime.<sup>17</sup>
- *Fullmetal Alchemist: Conqueror of Shamballa*, a spin-off, feature-length animated film, was nominated for Best Anime Features at the America Anime Awards and won “Best Cast,” “Best Long Series,” “Best Actor” (Vic Mignogna), “Best DVD Package Design,” and “Best Anime Theme Song” (“Rewrite” by Asian Kung-Fun Generation).<sup>18</sup>

**33. Seiji Mizushima. *Mobile Suit Gundam 00 Seasons 1 & 2*. Suginami, Tokyo, Japan: Sunrise, 2007-2009.**

*Mobile Suit Gundam 00* is part of the franchise entertainment titan of Japan known as *Gundam*. This particular piece began as an *anime* and was adapted into a game, film and an OVA.

- *Mobile Suit Gundam* is in a future where access to resources and space is limited to the great regions of world (former countries united into large blocks of area). War and strife abound and the members of Celestial Being aim to end war forever.
- *Mobile Suit Gundam* was included in the implications section of this paper.

**34. Nishimura, Satoshi, Director. *Trigun*. Honchō, Nakano, Tokyo: Madhouse, 1998. (*Trigun: The Complete Series*. Flower Mound, TX: FUNimation, 2010.)**

*Trigun* is based on two *manga* of the same name by Yasuhiro Nightow. It was further adapted into a feature-length animated film and a video game.

- *Trigun* is set on a desert-like planet where humans have resettled. Vash, a pacifist gunslinger with an enormous bounty on his head, tries to teach those around him that violence is never the right answer.
- *Trigun* was included in this project because episode #23 “Paradise” was included in the intervention at a participant’s request.

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<sup>17</sup>Anime News Network, “Anime Rankings.”

<sup>18</sup>Anime News Network, “American Anime Awards Finalists Announced.”

**35. Nishio, Daisuke, director. *Dragon Ball Z*. Higashi Ohizumi, Nerima, Tokyo, Japan: Toei Entertainment 1989-1996. (*Dragon Ball Z: Complete Collection*. Ft. Worth, TX: FUNimation, 1996-2009.)**

*Dragon Ball Z* began as a television series and expanded to include: twenty-six volumes of *manga*, fourteen feature-length animated films, three television specials, two OVAs, over fifty-seven video games, and one live-action film.

- *Dragon Ball Z* is about the hero, San Goku, who protects the earth from super villains.
- *Dragon Ball Z* was included in this project because of its significant influence on *anime*. Its numerous adaptations began in 1989 and continued through 2011.

**36. Nomura, Tetsuya and Nozue, Takeshi. *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children Complete*. Shinjuku, Tokyo, Japan: Square Enix, 2009. (*Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children Complete*. Culver City, CA: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2009).**

- *FFVII: AC* (as it is commonly called by the fans) is the continuation of the 1997 video game, *Final Fantasy VII*. The story follows the series' protagonist, Cloud, as he attempts to save his friends from the mimetic legacy of the series' antagonist, Sephiroth.
- *FFVII: AC* was discussed in chapter X for its contribution to mimetic legacy.
- *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children* won the “Best Anime Feature” at the inaugural American Anime Awards 2007 and was nominated for “Best DVD Package Design.”<sup>19</sup>

**37. Oshii, Mamoru, director. *Ghost in the Shell*. Kokubunji, Tokyo: Production I.G., 1995. (*Ghost in the Shell*. Lincolnshire, IL: Manga Entertainment, 2004.)**

*Ghost in the Shell* is based on the *manga* of the same name written by Shirow Masamune. The *Ghost in the Shell* universe also includes two seasons of television shows, two additional full-length animated films, one video game, and an OVA miniseries.

- *Ghost in the Shell* is a full-length movie following Japan's Public Security Section 9's search for a hacker known as the Puppet Master.
- *Ghost in the Shell* is referenced in the review of literature.

**38. Otomo, Katsuhiro, director. *Akira*. Nakano, Tokyo, Japan: TMS Entertainment, 1988. (*Akira*. Los Angeles, CA: Streamline Pictures, 1990.)**

*Akira* is based on the *manga* of the same name written by Katsuhiro Otomo.

- *Akira* is a full-length animated movie. Kaneda, a biker, tries to prevent his friend, Tetsuo from releasing the psychic, Akira, from his prison and unleashing destruction on the world.

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<sup>19</sup> Anime News Network, “American Anime Awards Finalists Announced and “American Anime Award Winners.”

- *Akira* is referenced in the review of literature and was one of the earliest *anime* to be translated to English and imported to the United States.
- *Akira* was nominated for Best Anime Feature at the 2007 American Anime Awards.<sup>20</sup>

**39. Sayama, Kiyoko, director. *Vampire Knight*. Japan: Studio Deen, 2008. (*Vampire Knight*. San Francisco, CA: Viz Entertainment, 2011.)**

*Vampire Knight* was adapted from the *manga* of the same name written by Matsuri Hino.

- *Vampire Knight* is television show about a school that has two separate classes: the day class is made up of humans and the night class of vampires.
- *Vampire Knight* is referenced in implications section.

**40. Tada, Shunsuke, director. *Kuroko no Basuke*. Kokubunji, Tokyo, Japan: Studio I.G, 2012. (This title has not been licensed in the United States, but was streaming as a simulcast from Japan from the website Crunchyroll. When it is eventually licensed to the western market, it will most likely be known as either *Kuroko's Basketball* or the *Basketball that Kurkoko Plays*. The *manga* that the *anime* is based upon, is likewise currently unavailable in English.)**

*Kuroko no Basuke* has been adapted from the *manga* of the same name written by Tadatoshi Fujimaki.

- *Kuroko no Basuke* is television show about a group of high school basketball players and their rise to the championship.
- *Kuroko no Basuke* is referenced in section about imitation and in the section about implications for the church.

**41. Takahata, Isao, director. *Pom Poko*. Tokyo, Japan: Studio Ghibli, 1994. (*Pom Poko*. Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Home Entertainment, 2005.)**

*Pom Poko* is an original story and has no further adaptations.

- *Pom Poko* is a full-length animated movie. *Shintō* spirits fight the encroachment of modern civilization.
- *Pom Poko* is referenced in the review of literature.

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<sup>20</sup>Anime News Network, “American Anime Awards Finalists Announced.”

42. **Takahasi, Ryōsuke Takahashi.** *Bakumatsu Kikansetsu rhanihoheto.* Suginami, Tokyo, Japan: Sunrise, 2006-2007. (*Intrigue in the Bakumatsu*. Houston: TX: Sentai Filmworks, 2012.)

*Intrigue in the Bakumatsu* is a stand-alone *anime* that has not been adapted into any other form.

- *Intrigue in the Bakumatsu* is an historical drama series about the end of the Japan's isolation from the outside world. It focuses on a man trying to atone for his past misdeeds and a troupe of actors seeking revenge.
- *Intrigue in the Bakumatsu* is referenced in the implication section.

43. **Takayanagi, Shigehit, director.** *Kami nomi zo Shiru Sekai.* Toranomon, Minato, Toyko, Japan: TV Tokyo, 2010. (*The World God Only Knows*. Houston: TX: Sentai Filmworks, 2012.)

*The World God Only Knows* began as a *manga* of the same name written by Tamiki Wakaki and has been adapted into three seasons *anime*, a series of four OVAs, and two light novels.

- *The World God Only Knows* a series about a boy with no friends and no social skills. His aspiration is to be the greatest dating sim gamer. The supernatural world recruits him for his skills.
- *The World God Only Knows* is referenced in the implication section.

44. **Takizawa, Toshifumi, director.** *Samurai 7.* Suginami, Toyko, Japan: Gonzo, 2004. (*Samurai 7*. Flower Mound, TX: FUNimation, 2004.)

*Samurai 7* is based on the movie *Seven Samurai* by director Akira Kurosawa.

- *Samurai 7* a series about a seven samurai who are hired to protect a small rice farming village from bandits.
- *Samurai 7* is referenced in the implication section.

45. **Taniguchi, Gorō, director.** *Code Geass: Lelouch of the Rebellion.* Suginami, Tokyo, Japan: Sunrise, 2006-2007. (*Code Geass: Lelouch of the Rebellion*. Flower Mound, TX: FUNimation, 2008.)

*Code Geass: Lelouch of the Rebellion* began as an animated television show and expanded into six separate *manga*, four OVAs, two light novels, two art books, weekly internet radio broadcasts, and three video games.

- LeLouch is an exiled prince sent to Britannia as a hostage. He gains the Geass, or power to bend anyone to his will. He joins the rebellion against Britannia.
- *Code Geass: Lelouch of the Rebellion* is referenced in this paper because a young man at Metrocon was dressed as the main character and was quoted in the paper.

- Ranked #5 in Anime News Network’s Top Ten Best Rated Anime and #9 in Anime News Network’s Top Ten Most Popular Anime.<sup>21</sup>

**46. Tezuka, Osamu, director. *Astro Boy*. Nerima, Tokyo, Japan: Mushi Productions, 1963-66. (*Astro Boy*. Grimes, IA: Right Stuff, Inc., 1963-1965).**

*Astro Boy* is based on the *manga* of the same name written by Osamu Tezuka and has been adapted into an animated television show, a live-action television show, a Disney full-length feature film, and four video games.

- *Astro Boy* is about a robot made to replace his creator’s dead son, his adventures in the circus, and fighting crime.
- *Astro Boy* is referenced in the review of literature.

**47. Tokoro, Tomokazu, Hiroyuki Tanaka, Yasuhiro Matsumura, directors. *Hellsing Ultimate*. Suginami, Toyko, Japan: Gonzo, 2005 (*Hellsing Ultimate*. Flower Mound, TX, FUNimation, 2006-2012.)**

*Hellsing Ultimate* is based on the *manga Hellsing* by Hirano Kouta and has been adapted into an animated television show. The *manga* of *Hellsing* has also been expanded by the prequel known as *Hellsing: the Dawn*.

- *Hellsing Ultimate* is the story of the Protestant Hellsing Organization and their fight against Vampires. The main character is Alucard, a vampire, who is controlled by The Hellsing Organization.
- *Hellsing Ultimate* was shown to The TBD Anime Club because it is one of the few *anime* that mentions the Protestant church by name.
- *Hellsing* was nominated for “Best DVD Package Design” and “Best Actor” (Crispin Freeman) for the 2007 American Anime Awards<sup>22</sup>

**48. Watanabe, Shinichirō, director. *Cowboy Bebop*. Suginami, Tokyo, Japan: Sunrise, 1998-1999. (*Cowboy Bebop*. Flower Mound, TX: FUNimation, 2001-2002.)**

*Cowboy Bebop* began as an *anime* and was expanded into a *manga* and a full-length animated feature film.

- *Cowboy Bebop* is the story of the bounty hunter crew of the spaceship Bebop as they travel the galaxy running down bounties and trying to earn enough money to eat.
- *Cowboy Bebop* was referenced because of its significant contribution to music in *anime*.
- *Cowboy Bebop* is ranked #8 in Anime News Network’s Top Ten Best Rated Anime and #3 in Anime News Network’s Top Ten Most Popular Anime.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Anime News Network, “Anime Rankings.”

<sup>22</sup>Anime News Network, “American Anime Awards Finalists Announced.”

<sup>23</sup>Anime News Network, “Anime Rankings.”

- 49.** Watanabe, Shinichirō, director. *Samurai Champloo*. Suginami, Toyko, Japan: Manglobe, 2004-2005. (*Samurai Champloo*. Flower Mound, TX: FUNimation, 2005-2006.)

*Samurai Champloo* began as an *anime* and was expanded into a *manga* and a video game.

- *Samurai Champloo* is the story of Fuu and her search for her father. She is accompanied in the journey by two men who become her bodyguards: Jin, a ronin samurai and Mugen, a former pirate.
- *Samurai Champloo* was shown in The TBD Anime Club and episode #19, “Unholy Union” was used in the intervention to discuss the nature of false prophets.
- *Samurai Champloo* was nominated for “Best Long Series” for the 2013 American Anime Awards.<sup>24</sup>

- 50.** *Hyakujuu-Ou GoLion*. Nerima, Tokyo, Japan: Toei Animation, 1981-1982. (*Voltron: Defender of the Universe*. New York, NY: Media Blasters, 1984).

*Voltron* began as an *anime* and was adapted into a series of American Saturday morning cartoons and a line of toys.

- *Voltron* is the story of five young men who traveled to a distant planet to help the inhabitants escape tyranny.
- *Voltron* was included in this project because it was the researcher’s first experience with *anime*.

- 51.** Yamasaki, Osamu. *Hakuōki*. Japan:Studio Deen, 2010. (*Hakuōki*. Houston: TX: Sentai Filmworks, 2012).

*Hakuōki* began as a video game series and was later adapted into *anime*, two live theatre performances, and two *manga*.

- *Hakuōki* is an historical/romance drama centered around a young girl who is saved from vampires by the historical *Shinsengumi* of Kyoto. She stays on as their servant as she searches for her father’s whereabouts.
- *Hakuōki* was included in the implications section.

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<sup>24</sup>Anime News Network, “American Anime Awards Finalists Announced.”

**APPENDIX B**  
**ANIME COMPLETED BY THE RESEARCHER**

Title	Type	Genre	Audience	Release Date
5 Centimeters Per Second	Movie	Romance	<i>Shōjo</i> <sup>1</sup> PG-13	2007
Akira	Movie	Science Fiction	<i>Shōnen</i> <sup>2</sup> R-17+	1988
Angel Beats!	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2010
The Animatrix	Movie	Science Fiction	<i>Shōnen</i> R-17+	2003
Another	TV	Horror	<i>Seinen</i> <sup>3</sup> R-17+	2012
Appleseed	Movie	Science Fiction	<i>Shōnen</i> R-17+	2004
Araiso Privite High School Council Executive Committee	Special	Slice of Life	<i>Shōjo</i> PG-13	2002
Asience: Hairy Tale	Special	Slice of Life	<i>Josei</i> Not Rated	2007
Baka and Test	TV	Comedy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2010
Bakumatsu	TV	Alternative History	<i>Seinen</i> PG-13	2006-2007
Baldr Force Exe Resolution	Mini-Series	Science Fiction	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2006-2007
Battle Angel Alita	Mini-Series	Science Fiction	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	1993
Battle of Clay 1&2	Short	Action	<i>Shōnen</i> PG	2004
Biohazard: Degeneration	Movie	Horror	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2008
Black Blood Brothers	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2006
Black Butler	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōjo</i> PG-13	2008-2009
Black Butler II	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōjo</i> PG-13	2010
Black Butler: His Butler, Performs	Special	Fantasy	<i>Shōjo</i> PG-13	2009
Black Cat	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2005-2006
Black Jack	Movie	Drama	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	1996
Blame!	Short	Science Fiction	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2003
Bleach: Fade to Black	Movie	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2008
Bleach: Hell Verse	Movie	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2010
Bleach: Memories in the Rain	Movie	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2005
Bleach: Memories of Nobody	Movie	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13 <i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2006

<sup>1</sup>*Shōjo* or 少女 is Anime for girls ages 7-18. The word translates as “girl” from Japanese.

<sup>2</sup>*Shōnen* or 少年 is Anime aimed at boys ages 10-18. The word translates as “boy” from Japanese.

<sup>3</sup>*Seinen* or 青年 is Anime for men ages 18-30. The word translates as “young man” or “young men” from Japanese.

Bleach: The Diamond Dust Rebellion	Movie	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2007
Bleach: The Sealed Sword Frenzy	Special	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2006
Blood +	TV	Horror	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2005
Blood the Last Vampire	Movie	Horror	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2000
Bloody Date	Short	Horror	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2006
Bloody Night	Short	Horror	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2006
Book of Bantorra	TV	Fantasy	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2009-2010
Broken Blade	Mini-Series	Science Fiction	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2010-2011
Broken Down Film	Short	Comedy	<i>Shōjo</i> PG	1985
Burst Angel: Infinity	Special	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2007
Bus Gamer	Mini-Series	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2008
Casshern Sins	TV	Science Fiction	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2008-2009
Castle in the Sky	Movie	Fantasy	<i>Shōjo</i> PG	1986
The Cat Returns	Movie	Fantasy	<i>Shōjo</i> PG	2002
CCW: Crazy Clay Wrestling	Short	Sports	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2007
Chainsaw Maiden	Short	Horror	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2007
Chrome Shelled Regios	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> R-17+	2009
Cluster Edge	TV	Science Fiction	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2005-2006
Coffee Samurai	Special	Fantasy	<i>Shōjo</i> PG	2009
Coicent	Special	Fantasy	<i>Shōjo</i> PG-13	2010
Corpse Princess	TV	Horror	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2008
Cowboy Bebop	TV	Science Fiction	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	1998-1999
Cowboy Bebop: The Movie	Movie	Science Fiction	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2001
Dark Side Cat	Mini-Series	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG	2006-2008
Darker Than Black	TV	Fantasy	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2007
Dead Leaves	Movie	Science Fiction	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2004
Deadman Wonderland	TV	Horror	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2011
Death Billiards	Special	Horror	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2013
Descendants of Darkness	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen-ai</i> <sup>4</sup> R-17+	2000-2001

<sup>4</sup>*Shōnen-ai* is a combination of two Japanese words *Shōnen* (translated as boy) and *ai* (translated as love). The genre is aimed at young women and features romantic stories between two male leads. *Shōjo-ai* is similar to *Shōnen-ai*, but the romance occurs between two female leads. More graphic representations of such relationships are *Yaoi* (male) and *Yuri* or 百合 (female) which are both under the umbrella of *Hentai* or 変態, which translates from the Japanese as “sexual perversion.” *Yaoi* is an acronym *Yama nashi, ochi nashi, imi nashi* or 山[場]なし、落ちなし、意味なし, which when translated means “No peak, no fall, no meaning.”

The Devil is a Part-Timer	TV	Comedy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2013
Devil May Cry	TV	Horror	<i>Shōnen</i> R-17+	2007
Dogs: Stay Dogs Howling in the Dark	Mini-Series	Crime	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2009
Dream Eater Merry	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2011
The Drop	Short	Comedy	<i>Seinen</i> PG	1965
Durarara!!	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> R-17+	2010
Eden of the East	TV	Fantasy	<i>Josei</i> <sup>5</sup> R-17+	2009
Eden of the East: King of the East	Movie	Fantasy	<i>Josei</i> PG-13	2009
Eden of the East: Paradise Lost	Movie	Fantasy	<i>Josei</i> PG-13	2010
Evangelion: 1.01 You are (Not) Alone	Movie	Science Fiction	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2007
Fake	Special	Comedy	<i>Shōnen-ai</i> PG-13	1998
Final Fantasy - The Spirits Within	Movie	Science Fiction	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2001
Final Fantasy VII - Advent Children	Movie	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2009
Final Fantasy VII - Last Order	Special	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2005
Final Fantasy VII - On the Way to a Smile	Special	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2009
Five Numbers!	Movie	Science Fiction	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2011
FLCL	Mini-Series	Science Fiction	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2000-2001
Free!	TV	Sports	<i>Shōjo</i> PG-13	2013
From Up On Poppy Hill	Movie	Slice of Life	<i>Shōjo</i> PG	2011
Fruits Basket	TV	Romance	<i>Shōjo</i> PG-13	2001
Full Metal Panic	TV	Science Fiction	<i>Shōnen</i> R-17+	2002
Full Metal Panic: Fumoffu	TV	Science Fiction	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2003
Full Metal Panic: The Second Raid	TV	Science Fiction	<i>Shōnen</i> R-17+	2005
Fullmetal Alchemist	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2003-2004
Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> R-17+	2009-2010

<sup>5</sup>*Josei* or 女性 is Anime aimed at women ages 15-44. The word can be translated as “woman,” “female,” “feminine,” or “womanhood” in Japanese.

Fullmetal Alchemist: Chibi Party	Special	Comedy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2006
Fullmetal Alchemist: Conqueror of Shamballa	Movie	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2005
Fullmetal Alchemist: Kids	Special	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2006
Fullmetal Alchemist: The Sacred Star of Milos	Movie	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> R-17+	2011
Gargantia on the Verdurous Planet	TV	Science Fiction	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2013
The Genesis	Short	Fantasy	<i>Seinen</i> PG	1968
Getbackers	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2002-2003
Ghost Hound	TV	Horror	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2007-2008
Ghost Hunt	TV	Horror	<i>Shōjo</i> PG-13	2006-2007
Ghost in the Shell	Movie	Science Fiction	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	1995
Ghost in the Shell: Arise - Border 1: Ghost Pain	Mini-Series	Science Fiction	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2013
Ghost in the Shell: Arise - Another Mission	Special	Science Fiction	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2013
Ghost in the Shell: Innocence	Movie	Science Fiction	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2004
Ghost in the Shell: Solid State Society	Movie	Science Fiction	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2006
Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex 1st Gig	TV	Science Fiction	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2002-2003
Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex 1st Gig: Tachikoma Days	Special	Comedy	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2004-2006
Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex 2nd Gig	TV	Science Fiction	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2004-2005
Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex 2nd Gig: Tachikoma Days	Special	Comedy	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2007
Giant Killing	TV	Sports	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2010
Grave of the	Movies	Historical	<i>Seinen</i> PG-13	1988

Fireflies (Hotaru no Haka)		Fiction		
Gravitation	TV	Music	<i>Shōnen-ai</i> PG-13	2000-2001
Gravitation: Lyrics of Love	Special	Music	<i>Shōnen-ai</i> R-17+	1999
Gunslinger Girl	TV	Horror	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2003-2004
Hakkenden: Eight Dogs of the East	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōjo</i> PG-13	2013
Hakuōki	TV	Romance	<i>Josei</i> R-17+	2010
Hakuōki Hekketsuroku	TV	Romance	<i>Josei</i> R-17+	2010
Hakuōki OVA	Special	Romance	<i>Josei</i> R-17+	2011-2012
Hakuōki Reimeiroku	TV	Romance	<i>Josei</i> R-17+	2012
Hakuōki Sekkaroku	Mini-Series	Romance	<i>Josei</i> R-17+	2011-2012
Hakuōki Special	Special	Romance	<i>Josei</i> R-17+	2010
Hamatora	TV	Mystery	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2014
Hell Girl	TV	Horror	<i>Josei</i> R-17+	2005-2006
Hell Girl: Two Mirrors	TV	Horror	<i>Josei</i> R-17+	2006-2007
Hellsing	TV	Horror	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2001-2002
Hetalia: Axis Powers	TV	Comedy	<i>Shōjo</i> PG-13	2009-2010
High School of the Dead	TV	Horror	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2010
Highlander: The Search for Vengeance	Movie	Fantasy	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2007
Hoshizora Kiseki	Special	Romance	<i>Shōjo</i> PG-13	2006
Howl's Moving Castle	Movie	Fantasy	<i>Shōjo</i> PG	2004
Initial D	TV	Sports	<i>Seinen</i> PG-13	1998
Inu X Boku	TV	Romance	<i>Shōjo</i> PG-13	2012
Inuyasha	TV	Romance	<i>Shōjo</i> PG-13	2000-2004
Inuyasha: Affections Touching Across Time	Movie	Romance	<i>Shōjo</i> PG-13	2001
Inuyasha: Fire on the Mystic Island	Movie	Romance	<i>Shōjo</i> PG-13	2004
Inuyasha: Sword of an Honorable Ruler	Movie	Romance	<i>Shōjo</i> PG-13	2003
Inuyasha: The Castle Beyond the Looking Glass	Movie	Romance	<i>Shōjo</i> PG-13	2002

Jing: King of Bandits	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2002
Jumping	Short	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG	1984
Jyu-Oh-Sei	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2006
K-Project	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2012
Kai Doh Maru	Special	Fantasy	<i>Josei</i> R-17+	2001
Kakurenbo	Short	Horror	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2004
Kamisama Dolls	TV	Fantasy	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2011
Karas	Movie	Fantasy	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2005-2007
Kaze no Stigma	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2007
Kid's On a Slope	TV	Music	<i>Josei</i> PG-13	2012
Kigeki	Special	Fantasy	<i>Seinen</i> PG-13	2002
King of Bandits Jing in Seventh Heaven	Movie	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2004
Kuroko no Basuke	TV	Sports	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2012-2014
Kuroko no Basuke NG-shuu	Special	Sports	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2012-2013
Kuroko no Basuke OVA 1	Special	Sports	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2013
Kyousou Giga	TV	Fantasy	<i>Seinen</i> PG-13	2013
La Storia della Arcana Famiglia	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōjo</i> PG-13	2012
Last Exile	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2003
La Maison en Petits Cubes	Short	Drama	<i>Seinen</i> G	2008
Le Potrait de Petite Cossette	Mini-Series	Horror	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2004
Little Witch Academia	Short	Fantasy	<i>Shōjo</i> PG-13	2013
Loveless	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen-ai</i> PG-13	2005
Lupin III: Dead or Alive	Movie	Crime	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	1996
Lupin III: Dragon of Doom	Movie	Crime	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2004
Lupin III: Operation Return the Treasure	Movie	Crime	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2003
Lupin III: Return of Pycal	Movie	Crime	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2002
Lupin III: The Castle of Cagliostro	Movie	Crime	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	1979
Lupin III: Voyage to Danger	Movie	Crime	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	1993
Lychee Light Club	TV	Horror	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2012

Macross Plus	Mini-Series	Science Fiction	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	1994-1995
Male	Short		<i>Shōnen</i> G	1962
Mardock Scramble: The First Compression	Special	Horror	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2010
Mazinkaiser SKL	Mini-Series	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> R-17+	2011
Mei to Koneko Bus	Special	Fantasy	<i>Shōjo</i> G	2001
Memory	Short	Fantasy	<i>Seinen</i> G	1964
Mermaid	Short	Fantasy	<i>Seinen</i> G	1964
Metropolis	Movie	Science Fiction	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2001
Millennium Actress	Movie	Historical Fiction	<i>Josei</i> PG-13	2001
Mirage of Blaze	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen-ai</i> PG-13	2002
Mirage of Blaze: Rebels of the Rivers Edge	Movie	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen-ai</i> R-17+	2004
Mobile Suit Gundam 00	TV	Science Fiction	<i>Shōnen</i> R-17+	2007-2008
Mobile Suit Gundam 00: 2nd Raid	TV	Science Fiction	<i>Shōnen</i> R-17+	2008-2009
Muramasa	Short	Fantasy	<i>Seinen</i> G	1987
My Little Monster	TV	Romance	<i>Shōjo</i> PG-13	2012
My Littler Monster OVA	Special	Romance	<i>Shōjo</i> PG-13	2013
Mushi-Shi	TV	Fantasy	<i>Seinen</i> PG-13	2005-2006
Mushi-Shi Special	Special	Fantasy	<i>Seinen</i> PG-13	2014
My Neighbor Totoro	Movie	Fantasy	<i>Shōjo</i> PG	1988
My Neighbors the Yamada's	Movie	Comedy	<i>Shōjo</i> PG	1999
My Teen Romantic Comedy Snafu	TV	Romance	<i>Shōjo</i> PG-13	2013
Mythical Detective Loki	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG	2003
Nabari no Ou	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG	2208
Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind	Movie	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG	1984
Negadon: The Monster from Mars	Special	Science Fiction	<i>Shōnen</i> PG	2005
Next A-Class	Special	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2012
Night Raid 1931	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> R-17+	2010
Ninja Scroll	Movie	Horror	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	1993
No. 6	TV	Fantasy	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2011
On Your Mark	Special	Music	<i>Seinen</i> G	1995

Origin - Spirits of the Past	Movie	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2006
Pale Cocoon	Special	Science Fiction	<i>Shōjo</i> PG-13	2006
Paprika	Movies	Science Fiction	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2006
Parasite Dolls	Mini-Series	Science Fiction	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2003
Peacemaker	TV	Historical Fiction	<i>Shōnen</i> R-17+	2003-2004
Perfect Blue	Movie	Science Fiction	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	1998
Persona 4	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2011-2012
Petshop of Horrors	Mini-Series	Horror	<i>Josei</i> R-17+	1999
Pictures At An Exhibit	Short	Fantasy	<i>Seinen</i> PG	1966
Place to Place	TV	Romance	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2012
The Place Promised in Our Early Days	Movie	Romance	<i>Shōjo</i> PG-13	2004
Planzet	Movie	Science Fiction	<i>Shōnen</i> Not Rated	2010
Ponyo	Movie	Fantasy	<i>Shōjo</i> G	2008
Pretear	TV	Romance	<i>Shōjo</i> PG-13	2001
Princess Mononoke	Movie	Fantasy	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	1997
Psychic Detective Yakumo	TV	Crime	<i>Shōjo</i> PG-13	2010
Psycho-Pass	TV	Crime	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2012-2013
Pumpkin Scissors	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2006-2007
Pupa	TV	Horror	<i>Shōnen</i> R-17+	2014
Push	Short	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	1987
Pussycat	Short	Fantasy	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2008
Read or Die	Mini-Series	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2001-2002
Recorder and Randsell Do	TV	Comedy	<i>Seinen</i> PG-13	2012
Recorder and Randsell Re	TV	Comedy	<i>Seinen</i> PG-13	2012
Recorder and Randsell Mi	TV	Comedy	<i>Seinen</i> PG-13	2013
Saiyuki	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2000-2001
Saiyuki Burial	Movie	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2007
Saiyuki Gaiden	Mini-Series	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2013
Saiyuki Gunlock	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2004
Saiyuki Interactive	Special	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2002
Saiyuki Reload	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2003-2004
Saiyuki Reload Urasai	Special	Comedy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2003-2004
Saiyuki Requiem	Movie	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2001
Samurai 7	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2004
Samurai Champloo	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> R-17+	2004

Samurai Deeper Kyo	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> R-17+	2002
Samurai X: Trust & Betrayal	Mini-Series	Fantasy	<i>Shōjo</i> R-17+	2001
Sands of Destruction	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2008
S-CRY-ed	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2001
The Secret World of Arrietty	Movie	Fantasy	<i>Shōjo</i> PG	2010
Sengoku Basara: Samurai King	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2009
Sengoku Basara: Samurai King 2	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2010
Sengoku Basara: Samurai King Specials	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2010
She and Her Cat	Short	Slice of Life	<i>Josei</i> G	2002
The Sky Crawlers	Movie	Science Fiction	<i>Shōjo</i> PG-13	2008
Soul Eater	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2008-2009
Space Dandy	TV	Comedy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2014
Speed Grapher	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōjo</i> R-17+	2005
Spirited Away	Movie	Fantasy	<i>Shōjo</i> PG	2001
Starship Troopers: Invasion	Movie	Science Fiction	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2012
Steamboy	Movie	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2004
Strait Jacket	Mini-Series	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> R-17+	2007-2008
Summer Wars	Movie	Fantasy	<i>Shōjo</i> PG-13	2009
Sword for Truth	Movie	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> R-17+	1990
Sword of the Stranger	Movie	Historical Fiction	<i>Shōnen</i> R-17+	2007
Tactics	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2005
Tales of the Street Corner	Short	Historical Fiction	<i>Seinen</i> PG-13	1962
This Boy Can Fight Aliens	Special	Science Fiction	<i>Shōnen-ai</i> PG	2011
Tokko	TV	Horror	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2006
Tokyo Godfathers	Movie	Slice of Life	<i>Josei</i> PG-13	2003
Tokyo Majin Gakuen Kenpucho: Tou	TV	Horror	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2007
Tokyo Majin Gakuen Kenpucho: Tou Dai Ni Maku	TV	Horror	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2007
Towa no Quon	Mini-Series	Science Fiction	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2011
Transformers	TV	Science Fiction	<i>Shōnen</i> PG	1984-1987

Trigun	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	1998
Trigun: Badland Rumble	Movie	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2010
Trinity Blood	TV	Fantasy	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2005
Tsuritama	TV	Comedy	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2012
The Twelve Kingdoms	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōjo</i> PG-13	2002-2003
Un-go	TV	Fantasy	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2011
Un-go: Inga-Ron	TV	Fantasy	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2011
The Unlimited Hyoubu Kyousuke	TV	Fantasy	<i>Seinen</i> R-17+	2013
Uraboku	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen-ai</i> R-17+	2010
Usagi Drop	TV	Slice of Life	<i>Josei</i> PG-14	2011
Uta no Prince-sama: <i>Maji Love 1000%</i>	TV	Music	<i>Shōjo</i> PG-13	2011
Uta no Prince-sama: <i>Maji Love 2000%</i>	TV	Music	<i>Shōjo</i> PG-13	2013
Vampire Hunter D	Movie	Horror	<i>Shōnen</i> R-17+	2000
Vassalord	Special	Horror	<i>Shōnen-ai</i> R-17+	2013
Vexille	Movie	Science Fiction	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2007
Voices of a Distant Star	Movie	Romance	<i>Shōjo</i> PG-13	2002
Volton	TV	Science Fiction	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	1981-1982
Wagnari!!!	TV	Comedy	<i>Shōjo</i> PG-13	2011
Wagnari!!! 2	TV	Comedy	<i>Shōjo</i> PG-13	2011
Waiting in the Summer	TV	Romance	<i>Shōjo</i> PG-13	2012
Witch Hunter Robin	TV	Horror	<i>Josei</i> PG-13	2003
Within the Bloody Woods	Short	Horror	<i>Shōnen</i> R-17+	2006
Wolf's Rain	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōjo</i> R-17+	2002
The World God Only Knows	TV	Comedy	<i>Shōjo</i> PG-13	2010
The World God Only Knows II	TV	Comedy	<i>Shōjo</i> PG-13	2011
X/1999	Movie	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	1996
Yamato Nadeshiko Schichi Henge	TV	Comedy	<i>Shōjo</i> PG-13	2006-2007
Yozakura Quartet	TV	Fantasy	<i>Shōnen</i> PG-13	2008

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